

The Prophecy of Daniel

INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL

Lesson #1

INTRODUCTION

The book of Daniel is unique in the Old Covenant Scriptures. It deals with matters transcendent to the Old Covenant itself, mentioning such things as the resurrection of the dead (12:2,3,12), the coming of Christ (7:13-14), and the day of judgment (7:9-10), as well as the displacement of world empires. Daniel was shown secrets that were “written in heaven” – things no other man had ever seen or heard before (Dan 10:21). He was also given to see the struggle of spiritual hosts that has rarely been expounded to prophets throughout history. That struggle, he was told, accounted for the shifting of political powers in the world.

WORLD EMPIRES

The great empires of the world, and their destinies, are unfolded in remarkable detail: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Unlike the manner of men, these kingdoms are presented according to their character, not their appearance or fame. At least two of these empires came into prominence long after Daniel had finished his course in this world.

ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES

The prominence of Daniel began during a period fraught with adversity. The people of God were grievously chastened through the Divinely appointed Babylonian captivity. The holy city, where God had placed His name, was sacked and destroyed. The Temple, Divinely established as a place where special closeness and ministry to the Living God took place, was destroyed. The gifted and capable people were removed from the land, leaving only those who would pose no threat to Babylon in the land. The king and his sons were taken captive. The holy vessels of the temple were removed and housed in a place devoted to idols. It is difficult to conceive of a period of time that could be more discouraging and conducive to despair.

Daniel was in a land that worshiped other gods, away from his parents and godly tutors. No prophets were in the land with him, and there was no respect for the Jews themselves, or the God they worshiped.

These circumstances were the environment in which Daniel rose to prominence. He became renown in that land for his wisdom, interpretation of dreams, and dependency upon God. The book contains several dreams and visions. Some of them were given to heathen kings, then interpreted by Daniel. Others were given directly to Daniel himself.

The book records intense Divine activity, even though the surroundings did not seem conducive to it.

AUTHENTICITY DENIED

As early as the third century, the authenticity of Daniel was aggressively denied. Although it was a clear departure from the unanimous acceptance of this book, a man named Porphyry boldly denounced Daniel as invalid. Living in the third century, this man was an aggressive opponent of the faith. He wrote fifteen books against Christianity, with the twelfth one being against the book of Daniel. He was a very learned man, and hence his writings were very disciplined and difficult to answer. It is as though Satan raised him up to challenge the authenticity of Daniel. Of his works, Dr. Lardner wrote, "Porphyry's work against the Christians was much labored, and that in his argument he displayed all of his learning, which was very considerable. Hence we can perceive the difficulty of undertaking an answer to him, for which very few were qualified; in which none of the apologists for Christianity seemed to have answered expectations." Lardner's Works, Volume 7, Page 401

All of Porphyry's books have been lost. Barnes Notes on Daniel This, it seems to me, is a clear judgment from God.

I mention this bit of literary trivia for a reason. Porphyry was an opponent of Christianity, yet saw a clear connection between the book of Daniel and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why he opposed it.

If a man of such marked depravity could see such an association, it ought to be exceedingly apparent to the disciples of Christ, who have embraced Him in faith.

PROPHESIED THE LONGEST PERIOD

The longest period of earth's history is prophesied by Daniel, covering significant details of several centuries. The time of Christ's death, which occurred approximately 600 years after Daniel's death, is declared with astounding precision, as well as the fall of great empires and even the day of judgment. Long prophetic periods are depicted by durations called "seventy weeks" (9:24) , "seven weeks," "sixty-two weeks" (9:25), "two thousand and two hundred days" (8:14), "a time, times, and an half" (12:7), "a thousand two hundred and ninety days" (12:11), and "the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days" (12:12).

Daniel's prophecy of the coming Messiah was so remarkably precise that one Jewish Rabbi "who lived about fifty years before the coming of Christ, asserted that the time of Messiah, as signified by Daniel, , could not be deferred longer than those fifty years." John Gill, quoting R. Nehemiah apud Grotium , de Ver. Relig. 1.5 Sect. 14.

A RECORD OF DOMINIONS

In this book, Daniel weaves history and prophecy together through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He refers to kings with whom he had to do:

- "Jehoiakim king of Judah" (1:1)
- "Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (1:1)
- "Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans" (5:30)
- "Belshazzar king of Babylon" (7:1)
- "Cyrus king of Persia" (10:1)
- "Darius the Mede" (11:1)

Daniel also refers to evil spiritual rulers in the heavenly places who exercised dominion over nations.

- "The prince of Persia"
- "The prince of Grecian" (10:20).

There are also holy heavenly powers mentioned by Daniel – lofty angelic personages that impact the history of the world.

- An angel who delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace (3:28).

- An angel who delivered Daniel from the lion's den (6:22).
- A heavenly messenger who broke through wicked high powers to bring a message to Daniel (10:11-13).
- Michael , a chief heavenly prince. He assisted in casting down hindering powers, and is said to eventually stand up for the people of Israel (10:13,21; 12:1).
- Gabriel , a mighty angel, who personally, delivered a critical message to Daniel (8:16; 9:21).

Peering into the future, the prophet also mentioned coming rulers, speaking of their character and dominion. These include the following.

- “A king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences” (8:23)
- “The king of the South” (11:5)
- “The king of the North” (11:6).

He also speaks of powerful rulers in parabolic form.

- A “little horn” springing up amidst ten other powers (7:5)
- “A ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward” (8:4)
- A “he goat from the West” (8:5)
- “A little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the South, and toward the East, and toward the pleasant land” (8:9)
- “A king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences” (8:23).

Daniel unveils the collapse of specific world powers: Babylonia, Medes and Persians, Greece, and Rome. All of this will be accomplished through a kingdom God Himself would set up (2:36-44). That kingdom is nothing less than the reign of “the Man Christ Jesus.”

A Book About Authority

This book is about authority – the authority of God versus the authority of men. The authority of Jehoiakim was cast down by God. Nebuchadnezzar was reduced to a grass-eating animal. Belshazzar lost his dominion in a single night. All of these were judgments from God. When the rule of these men clashed with the rule of the Living God, they were thrown down suddenly and decisively.

The most significant powers of the world are presented as temporal, and destined for failure. Their success is limited, and only for a time. Daniel is shown that ultimately the kingdom of God will fill “the whole earth,” standing forever (2:35,44).

The sovereignty of God is affirmed with remarkable consistency and power in this book. He is truly “the Governor among the nations,” and the kingdom, or dominion, belongs to Him (Psa 22:28).

Nebuchadnezzar learned this the hard way. However, after he had been tutored in the field and deprived of his mind, he clearly saw the greatness of God.

A Temptation Men Will Face

Because of the uniqueness of Daniel's prophecies, men often experience strong inclinations to approach them with an academic mind. Thus, their thinking becomes more historical than spiritual, and they miss the real message of this book. We must resist any temptation to so approach this record. Although there are historical matters to be seen in it, there is a canopy of truth that overshadows them.

Daniel confirms there is a spiritual struggle behind what appears on the earth. Above flesh and blood, and unseen to the human eye, God is governing the affairs of men. No kingdom lasts longer than God intends, and it obtains its power apart from flesh and blood. At the precise point the kingdoms of this world begin to extend beyond the will of God, their demise also commences.

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

The people of God are also prominent in the book of Daniel. According to appearance, it looked as though Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius, and the likes, were most prominent. Their kingdoms appeared to be in control. Actually, however, Daniel had more control than those kings. God so orchestrated circumstances that those very kings had to rely upon the wisdom and counsel of this man of God. Although, from one point of view, Daniel, Hananiah,

Michael, and Azariah appeared to be captives, yet they were exalted in the empires that thought to hold them.

It is written that Nebuchadnezzar "worshiped Daniel" (2:46), making him "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon" (2:48). He also "set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon" (2:49), and "promoted" them in the province of Babylon (3:30). Belshazzar made Daniel "the third ruler of the kingdom" (5:29). Darius made him the first "president," placing him over all the princes of his empire (6:1-2). He also "prospered in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (6:28).

All of this confirms that God's people have been destined to ultimately rule. Daniel and his three Hebrew colleagues lived that out in a heathen empire. Corroborating that this is not intended to be limited to the time of Daniel, the Lord revealed to him a coming time when the kingdom under the whole heavens would be given to the saints of the Most High God.

Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was given to him by God (2:37). God also gave Belshazzar's kingdom to the Medes (5:28). That, however, was only a very small picture of what God has determined for the future. Under the reign of Jesus, and in spite of a fierce war waged against the saints, the kingdom is going to be given to them. Three times God announces His determination that His people will possess

His Kingdom.

- TAKE THE KINGDOM. “But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom , and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.” (7:18)
- POSSESS THE KINGDOM. “Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom .” (7:22)
- GIVEN THE KINGDOM. “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High , whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” (7:25)

All of this is in harmony with the words of the Psalmist. “. . . those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth . . . But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace . . . For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth” (Psa 37:9,11,22). The Lord Jesus Himself confirmed these things. “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5).

Let no child of God imagine opposition and hardship is the end of the story! The saints will no more be left in oppression forever than Joseph was forever in the pit, or in the prison! Those who, through faith, side with God, will be exalted. That is the message you must receive from this book! Jesus confirmed this is the case: “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Rev 2:26-27) . Again He promised, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Rev 3:21). Paul declared the same: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim 2:12).

Aside from the many other advantages found in a study of Daniel, the fact of the saints possessing the kingdom should be enough to provoke an intense interest in this book.

CONTEMPORARY PROPHETS

It is of interest to note other prophets whose prophecies were given within the time frame of Daniel. They include Habakkuk (606 BC), Ezekiel (593-571 BC), and Joel (592 BC). Prophets living after him, who no doubt profited from his wisdom, include Haggai and Zechariah (520 BC), Ezra (536-458 BC), Malachi (450 BC), and Nehemiah (444-430 BC).

Yet, Daniel’s prophecy is most unique, confirming the unusual breadth in revelation from God. God does not speak in monotones, nor does He leave the mind unchallenged and the heart unsatisfied. Those who take this book to heart will certainly not be bored. It will provide us with insights into the triumphant nature of the Kingdom of our God and His Christ.

JESUS REFERRED TO DANIEL

In His Olivet discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem, His coming, and the end of the world (Matt 24:3), Jesus referred to the writings of Daniel. His words are couched in a prophecy that speaks of “the love of many” waxing cold, the Gospel being preached “in all the world for a witness unto all nations,” and “the end” (Matt 24:12-14). Although they have been variously interpreted, no thinking person questions their sobriety or significance. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains” (Matt 24:15-16). The text to which Jesus referred is Daniel 9:27: “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” There is also an allusion to Daniel 12:11: “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.”

At the every earliest, this would have referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in 70 AD. That puts Daniel’s prophesy approximately 700 years before God’s judgment on Jerusalem. However, Daniel’s prophesy does not end with the “abomination of desolation,” but speaks of succeeding events.

- The people who know their God will do great exploits (11:32).
- Those who understand will instruct many (11:33).
- Those who fall will be helped a little (11:34).
- Some with understanding will be tried, purged, and made white, even to the time of the end (11:35).
- The one bringing the abomination will himself be overthrown (11:40).
- A king from the North will enter into “the glorious land, and many countries will be overthrown” (11:41).
- Michael will stand up for the people of God (Israel), and a time of unparalleled trouble will ensue (12:1).

I only give these samples to confirm the contemporary relevance of the book of Daniel. It certainly is not a book of mere proverbial wisdom, like the book of Proverbs, or a book of observations “under the sun” like Ecclesiastes. Nor, indeed, is it basically historical, like the book of Numbers. Neither is it a book of Divinely instituted procedures, like Leviticus, or an historical record like Esther. Rather, it has to do with the glorious triumph of the Kingdom of God. It particularly relates to the reign of the Lord Jesus, and the Divinely determined overthrow of all powers aligned against Him. It is the only Old Testament book in which the word “Messiah” appears (9:25,26). Although the references are few, the implications of them are magnificently large.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHET DANIEL

WHO DANIEL IS NOT

There are two other men named “Daniel” in Scripture. Allow me to first dispense with the notion that they are the Daniel mentioned in this book. David had a son through Abigail that was named “Daniel.” He was the second son she bore to him. It is written, “Now these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron; the firstborn Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess” (1 Chron 3:1). He was also called “Chileab” (2 Sam 3:3). There was also a priest of the family of Ithamar whose name was Daniel. He returned with Ezra from the captivity. Thus it is written, “These are now the chief of their fathers, and this is the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king. Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush” (Ezra 8:1-2). He was among those who sealed the covenant in the days of Nehemiah (Neh 10:1,6).

Neither of these men could be Daniel the prophet. The first, second son of David through Abigail, was born over four centuries before Daniel the prophet. The second man, who traveled with Ezra, lived approximately seventy-five years after Daniel completed his ministry.

WHO HE IS

In Daniel we find a man whose influence spanned the notable reigns of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans, Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian – a period of seventy one years (606 BC - 535 BC) – nearly twice as long as the ministry of Moses, “the servant of God” ! During that full span, Daniel maintained his faith and integrity, never compromising his convictions. There is no sin recorded against Daniel, even though a significant part of his life is covered in Scripture. The power of faith and the significance of “power with man” is clearly delineated in this marvelous book.

AN EMPHASIS ON HIS PERSON

Scripture emphasize the man Daniel himself. We do not know the name of his father or mother, of any other member of his family. We do not know if he was married or had a family. Although he may have been rendered a eunuch for the sake of serving in the king’s court, there is no sure word about this. The only things we know about Daniel pertained to his ministry – his work for the Lord in a heathen land, and under heathen kings. That, and that alone, is what distinguishes him among the sons of men.

Number of References

The number of references to Daniel himself are staggering. The prophet is referred to as “Daniel” seventy-five times in the book of Daniel, and ten times as “Belteshazzar” (12 Chapters: 7 times per chapter). By way of comparison, Isaiah is mentioned sixteen times in Isaiah (66 chapters: once every 4 chapters), sixteen times in Kings and Chronicles, and twenty-one times in the New Testament Scriptures. Jeremiah is mentioned one hundred and thirty times in Jeremiah (52 chapters: 2.3 times every chapter), sixteen times in other Old Testament books, and once in the New Covenant writings.

Ezekiel is mentioned two times in Ezekiel (48 chapters: once every 24 chapters), and nowhere else. Amos is mentioned seven times in Amos (9 chapters: slightly over once per chapter). Malachi is mentioned once in Malachi (4 chapters). Zechariah is mentioned four times in Zechariah (14 chapters, little over 3 times per chapter).

His Ministry

The ministry of the prophet Daniel was of unusual duration. It extended from the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar well past the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede (Dan 1:21; 11:1). Conservative Jewish scholars estimate his ministry to have extended from 606 BC until 535 BC – 71 years!

Although this is an estimated period of time, it is most impressive when compared with the tenure of other great leaders and prophets of God. The following are approximations.

- Moses' leadership, 40 years.
- Joshua's leadership, 40 years.
- Isaiah's ministry, 40 years
- Jeremiah's ministry, 40 years
- Ezekiel's ministry, 22 years
- Reign of David, 40 years
- Reign of Solomon, 40 years
- Paul' ministry, 35 years
- Peter's ministry, 30-40 years

His Qualities

All of this confirms an undeniable emphasis on the person Daniel himself. An angel from heaven told him he was “greatly beloved” in the heavenly realms (9:23). Some of the traits for which he became renown – things given to him by God – include:

- Knowledge (1:17a)
- Skill in learning (1:17b)
- Skill in wisdom (1:17d)
- Understanding in all visions and dreams (1:17e)
- In all matters of wisdom and understanding, “ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers” in that realm (1:20).
- Able to make dreams known, as well as interpret them (2:26-27).
- The Spirit of the holy God was in him (4:9a).
- No secret troubled him (4:9b).
- “Light,” “understanding,” and “wisdom” were in him (5:14).
- He could “make interpretations and “dissolve doubts” (5:16).
- An “excellent spirit” was in him (6:2).
- He was “faithful” (6:4a).

- No error or fault could be found in him (6:4b).
- He served God “continually” (6:16).
- Among the heathen, the Lord was known as “the God of Daniel” (6:26).
- He “understood” by Jeremiah’s books Babylonian captivity was coming to a conclusion (9:2).
- He set his heart to understand (10:12).

His Promotions

Over this unusually lengthy period, Daniel obtained much favor from the different rulers, for God was with him. He impacted the history of the world by altering the manner in which world rulers thought.

- Nebuchadnezzar “made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon” (2:48).
- Belshazzar “clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom” (5:29).
- Darius established three presidents in the land “of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage” (6:2).
- After the fall of the Babylonian empire, it is said of Daniel, “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian” (6:28).

Joseph influenced one Pharaoh. Daniel influences four world monarchs, and three political dynasties. All of this was done while in the midst of the environment he impacted. The remarkable thing about this was that he was in the land of captivity – Babylon. So far as we know, no prophets arose when Israel was in Egyptian bondage. When Samuel was born, there was a long period during which little, if any, revelation was received from God. It is said, “And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision” 1 Sam 3:1). David spoke of a time when the Israelites lamented, “no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be” (Psa 74:9). Yet here, in Daniel, we find a man with continuous influence with very few interruptions. This is a most remarkable situation.

Some of his ministry includes the following.

- Interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great image (2:31-45).
- Interpreted Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a great tree in the midst of the earth that was hewn down (4:10-228).
- Interpreted handwriting that appeared on the wall during an evil feast hosted by Belshazzar (5:25-28).
- Had the dream and vision of four great beasts rising out of the sea, depicting great world empires (7:1-8).
- Had a vision of the day of judgment and the opening of the books (7:9-10).
- Saw a night vision of one like the Son of man, who came with the clouds of heaven, and was given “dominion, glory, and a kingdom” – an everlasting dominion that would never pass away (7:13).
- Was told the saints of the Most High God would be given the kingdom of God (7:22,25,27).

- Saw a vision of a ram and a he goat, depicting violent and competitive kingdoms (8:1-8).
- God revealed to him the rise of a political power depicted as a little horn, rising out of fallen empires (8:9-11).
- Heard two saints speaking about the duration of the vision concerning the daily sacrifice and the cleansing of the sanctuary (8:13-14).
- Received an interpretation of the vision from the angel Gabriel. It involved the kingdoms the Medes and Persia, and Greece (8:16-26).
- Prophesied of the exact time of Christ's death, the removal of sin, and the bringing in of everlasting righteousness (9:24-27).
- Was given to understand the profound spiritual battle behind the scenes that brought the fall of Persia and the rise of Greece (10:12-21).
- The activities of certain Persian kings, a king of the North, and a king of the South, Greece, and remarkable complexities regarding their role in Divinely appointed history. Political supremacy continues until God's land and people are reproached (11:1-45).
- Given to see a time when Michael the archangel would stand up for Israel, he being their guardian (12:1).
- The resurrection of the dead, and the shining forth of the righteous (12:2-3).
- A time close to "the end" when knowledge would be greatly increased, with extensive movement among the people (12:4).
- The duration of a "time, times, and half" is specified , also made known in the Revelation (Rev 12:14) – a time in which Divine intentions would be fulfilled.

The details and manner of speech relating to these prophecies are still a source of challenge to the people of God. We will find that much of what Daniel saw has, in remarkable detail, been fulfilled in history.

A Lesson to be Learned

The point to be seen at this juncture is how much God is willing to make known to those living close to Him. Let none imagine there are no restraints in this revelation. Some things that were revealed to Daniel in a broad sense, were actually hidden from him as well. Thus the Lord declared of his closing vision, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end" (12:9). And again he was told, "But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days" (12:13).

Thus we behold one of the Lord's manners. He reveals enough so that His people can be assured of His meticulous ordering of all things. Yet, lest their curiosity overtake their thinking, they are told they must wait until the appropriate time before their understanding can be full.

OF THE CHILDREN OF JUDAH

"Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel . . ." (1:6). Daniel was from the tribe and kingdom of Judah – of the "children of Judah." The numbering of these people began after the Israelites were delivered from Egypt (Num 1:26). Their standard, or ensign, was "in the first place" among their armies (Num 10:14). They were also the first tribe to receive an inheritance in the promised land (Josh 15:1-12). Later, during the kings, they dwelt in Jerusalem (1 Chron 9:3).

Following the death of king Solomon, the united kingdom of Israel was divided into two groups. Only David and Solomon reigned over a united Kingdom. Ezekiel prophesied the two divisions would become one once more (Ezek 37:16-22). Jeremiah declared the New Covenant was to be made “with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah” (Jer 31:31). From the time of their division, and until the time of their union, contention existed between the two (1 Kgs 15:17; 2 Kgs 14:11-13).

The kingdom of Judah was known as the “southern kingdom,” and was comprised of two tribes, Judah and part of Benjamin, with Simeon being included later (1 Kgs 12:21-23). This was known as “the kingdom of Judah” (2 Chron 11:17). Kings of Judah included:

Kings of Judah

- Rehoboam, seventeen years (1 Kgs 14:21)
- Abijah, or Abijam, three years (2 Chron 13:1-2)
- Asa, forty-one years (2 Chron 16:13)
- Jehoshaphat, twenty-five years (1 Kgs 22:42)
- Jehoram, eight years (2 Chron 21:5)
- Ahaziah, one year (2 Kgs 8:26)
- Athaliah's usurpation, six years (2 Kgs 11:2-3)
- Joash, or Jehoash, forty years (2 Kgs 12:1)
- Amaziah, twenty-nine years (2 Kgs 15:1-2)
- Uzziah, or Azariah, fifty-two years (2 Chron 26:3)
- Jotham, sixteen years (2 Chron 27:1)
- Ahaz, sixteen years (2 Kgs 16:2)
- Hezekiah, twenty-nine years (2 Chron 29:1)
- Manasseh, fifty-five years (2 Kgs 21:1)
- Amon, two years (2 Kgs 21:19)
- Josiah, thirty-one years (2 Kgs 22:1)
- Jehoahaz, Josiah's son, three months (2 Chron 36:2)
- Jehoiakim, Josiah's son, eleven years (2 Kgs 23:36)
- Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, Jehoiakim's son, three months (2 Kgs 24:8)
- Zedekiah, or Mattaniah, Josiah's son, eleven years (2 Kgs 24:18)

The other ten tribes comprised the kingdom of Israel, or “northern kingdom.” (1 Kgs 11:31). Their kings include:

Kings of Israel

- Jeroboam, twenty-two years (2 Kgs 14:20)
- Nadab, about two years (1 Kgs 15:25)
- Baasha, twenty-four years (1 Kgs 15:33)
- Elah, two years (1 Kgs 16:8)
- Zimri, seven days (1 Kgs 16:15)
- Omri, twelve years (1 Kgs 16:23)

- Ahab, twenty-two years (1 Kgs 16:29)
- Ahaziah, two years (1 Kgs 22:51)
- Jehoram, twelve years (2 Kgs 3:1)
- Jehu, twenty-eight years (2 Kgs 10:36)
- Jehoahaz, seventeen years (2 Kgs 13:1)
- Jehoash, sixteen years (2 Kgs 13:10)
- Jeroboam II, forty-one years (2 Kgs 14:23)
- Zachariah, six months (2 Kgs 15:8)
- Shallum, one month (2 Kgs 15:13)
- Menahem, ten years (2 Kgs 15:17)
- Pekahiah, two years (2 Kgs 15:23)
- Pekah, twenty years (2 Kgs 15:27)
- Hoshea, nine years (2 Kgs 17:1)

I have taken the time to list the divisions of the children of Israel, and the kings associated with those divisions. Some references will be made to these separate groups and kings in the book of Daniel. A knowledge of these things will also serve to give a better understanding of God's workings with His people Israel. It will also serve to accentuate the complexities under which God's will was meticulously and patiently wrought through them, in preparation for Christ.

Children of Israel AND Children of Judah

It might appear confusing that the group to which Daniel belonged is called "children of Israel" in verse three, and "children of Judah" in verse six. The term "children of Israel" refers to the offspring of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel (Gen 32:28). In this sense, the Jews are often referred to as "the WHOLE HOUSE of Israel" (Ezek 37:11; 39:25). Paul also refers to the whole nation as "Israel" (Rom 10:1) and "all Israel" (Rom 11:26). The Revelation also refers to them as "the twelve tribes of Israel" (Rev 21:12), even though politically Israel had ten tribes.

Daniel, then, refers to the offspring of Abraham when he says "children of Israel." When using "children of Judah," he is speaking of the particular division of that people who were being chastened in the Babylonian captivity.

The Significance of These Things

Both Israel and Judah were taken away in captivities – but not the same one. Over a period of one hundred and fifty years, Israel was carried captive into Assyria. This occurred in two stages. The first occurred around 732 BC, during the reign of Pekah, when "And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day" (1 Chron 5:26). The inhabitants of Galilee were also included in this Assyrian captivity (2 Kgs 15:29). During the reign of Hosea, "Shalmaneser king of Assyria" twice invaded the land, carrying away additional captives.

The captivity of Judah was not all accomplished in a single besiegement. Around 701 BC, "Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them" (2 Kgs 18:13). Later, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Judah, and the city of Jerusalem, their capital. He

accomplished three separate deportations. In the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, he came against Judah, making Jehoiakim his vassal (2 Kgs 24:1). During the reign of Jehoiachin, he carried away 10,000 captives (2 Kgs 24:14-15). During the reign of Zedekiah, he also carried the rest of the people who were left in the city, as well as some fugitives (2 Kgs 25:11). An addition deportation took place during Zedekiah's reign, in which 4,600 were removed (Jer 52:28-30).

CARRIED AWAY CAPTIVE

Daniel specifies that he was taken captive during the third year of the reign of king Jehoiakim. This was the second deportation, after that of Sennacherib, and before the final one during the reign of Zedekiah. I do not know how much of the previous assaults Daniel had known experientially, but he certainly was raised during tumultuous times! We will see how God can bring good things during bad times. I have often heard people lament concerning our own days, saying that it is not wise to have and raise children during such times. What will such people say to Daniel, who was both conceived and reared in extremely trying times?

It appears from the narrative that Daniel and his three companions were all that were taken from the children of Judah. If this is so, it underscores the unusual qualities perceived in them.

This is the captivity around which Matthew reckons Christ's genealogy. "... and to Josiah were born Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon . And after the deportation to Babylon , to Jeconiah was born Shealtiel; and to Shealtiel, Zerubbabel . . . Therefore all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the time of Christ fourteen generations" (Matt 1:11-12,17).

A Lesson to be Learned

There is a lesson to be learned here. The very genealogy of our Lord was reckoned in relation to an unforgettable captivity. Israel surely lamented that captivity. As it is written, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Psa 137:1-4).

The Babylonian captivity took the singing out of the rank and file of the people. On the banks of those Babylonian rivers, they sat and wept when they remembered Zion, the dwelling place of God's name. But Daniel did not sit down and weep. He rather rose to the occasion, kept the faith, and was used mightily of God. What a noble example he is for us.

It is possible for the time of chastening to be a time of recovery and spiritual advancement. Is it

not written, “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word” (Psa 119:67). Take heart, child of God, and learn from your difficult times. They can make you more sensitive and more determined, as they did young Daniel.

OF ROYAL SEED

“And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes.” Other versions refer to this manager as “Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials,” NASB “Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials,” NIV “his palace master Ashpenaz,” NRSV and “his chief eunuch.” RSV

Among other things, we should learn from this text that excellent natural capacities come from God, and should be dedicated to God. In the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar, skilled and understanding young men should not be given over to mundane things, but should serve the king. If this was so with an earthly potentate, how much more is it true of the King of kings!

Eunuchs

Considerable speculation has been offered for the use of the word “eunuch” in Scripture. The literal meaning of the word involves emasculation, or rendering the man incapable of reproduction. The practice of some heathen countries was to so treat men who were in close proximity to the king and his wives, or those who had the charge of others. This, it is conjectured, was intended to neutralize the possibility of corruption breaking out in the king's court. In whatever sense you choose to take the word, it denotes a devoted servant.

The majority of the times this word is used in Scripture, it is translated “officer” or “chamberlain.” Isaiah used the word in a clear reference to sterility (Isa 56:3). One of the first Gentile converts was a “eunuch” who was the treasurer of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians (Acts 8:27).

The point to be seen here is that the king directed one of his most trusted servants to do his will. This was no mere formality. The sensitivity of the passage is driven by the suggestion that Daniel and his three Hebrew colleagues were also made eunuchs (1:7-18). They were selected for choice service to the king, and within the vast Babylonian empire.

Nebuchadnezzar knew how to identify and capitalize on unusual resources. While some might imagine this was purely a natural endowment, it rather appears that this was the working of the Lord, even though the king himself was not aware of it. God is going to use Daniel in a most significant way. Therefore, he moves the king to provide the opportunity for that purpose to be fulfilled.

The King's Seed

“ . . . that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes” (Dan 1:3). Other versions read, “the king's descendants and some of the nobles,” NKJV “some of the royal family and of the nobles,” NASB and “from the royal family and the nobility.” NIV

These were children of high ranking Israelites, often related to the king himself. These were the most promising prospects among the children, who had greater potential and capacities. The most talent and ability would, in the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, reside in this generation. Scripture affirms these qualities did, in fact, exist in Daniel.

How marvelous that a young believer could surface when the most talented, those with the greatest potential, and with the most capacity to learn and be profitable, were sought. For king Nebuchadnezzar, it was not a time of crisis, like the time young Joseph was discovered (Gen 41). It was, however, a time of need, like when Moses rose to the surface through the call of God (Ex 3). At the time of our text, in Babylon, the interest of that impressive kingdom was sought – not among the Babylonian youth, but among those taken captive from Israel. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

We will see Daniel called into spiritual prominence while young, captive in a heathen kingdom, and away from his family and country. As you must know, God is not a slave to particular procedures. He does not always work in the same way.

- Noah was found by God alone, without any human intervention (Gen 6:8,13).
- Abraham was also called of God without any human intervention (Gen 12:1).
- Joseph was called to his Divinely appointed role through a Pharaoh (Gen 41).
- Moses was called by an Angel speaking through a burning bush (Ex 3).
- Elisha was called to the prophetic office when Elijah cast his mantel upon him (1 Kgs 19:19-20).
- David was called to be king by the prophet Samuel while caring for sheepfolds (1 Sam 16:1; Psa 78:70).
- Amos was called while among the herdmen of Tekoa (Amos 1:1).
- Ezekiel was called by God while a captive in Babylon by the river Chebar (Ezek 1:1).
- The twelve Apostles were called by the Lord Jesus Himself, prior to His death (Lk 6:13-16).
- Matthias was chosen to take Judas' bishopric through prayer and the casting of lots (Acts 1:20-26).
- Paul was called to the office of Apostle by the resurrected and glorified Christ (Acts 9:4-5).
- Timothy was brought into the Lord's work by the choice of Paul (Acts 16:3).
- Barnabas and Saul were called to a work by the Holy Spirit directing certain prophets at Antioch (Acts 13:1-2).

Some Timely Lessons

There are some timely lessons to be learned from the record of Daniel.

- While young, he had to conduct himself honorably and with spiritual integrity away from home.
- He had to be alert to his surroundings, thus enabling him to capitalize on opportunities, and avoid demeaning the name of the living God.
- When young, he had to communicate effectively with those over him, explaining the reason for his conduct.
- He had to be bold enough to take a stand against the edict of a king, and wise enough to explain his choice well.
- When captive, he formed holy alliances – other young men with whom he could discuss challenges and pray to the God of all the earth.

WROTE THE BOOK HIMSELF

Some sophists say that Daniel did not write the book bearing his name. While their arguments are wholly unworthy of mention, the manner in which the book speaks clearly affirms Daniel was its writer. “Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream . . . I saw in my vision by night . . . As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me : but I kept the matter in my heart . . . a vision appeared unto me , even unto me Daniel , after that which appeared unto me at the first . . . And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel , had seen the vision . . . And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days . . . reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet . . . In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks . . . Then I Daniel looked” (Dan 7:1,2,28; 8:1,15,27; 9:2; 10:2; 12:5).

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES TO HIM

There are other references to Daniel in Scripture that confirm his role in the Divine economy. Ezekiel, who prophesied in the latter part of Daniel’s ministry, was thrice moved by the Spirit to speak of Daniel. His statements are most arresting, and reveal much about the prophet Daniel.

Ezekiel

- **RIGHTEOUSNESS.** “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel , and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness , saith the Lord GOD . . . Though Noah, Daniel , and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness ” (Ezek 13:14,20). Here the Lord denounces those of His people who dared to set up idols in their houses. He declared He would stretch out His hand against such people. Then He postulates the presence of three notable men in such a place. He calls for a man before the flood – Noah . He calls for a man after the flood, and before the Law – Job . And he calls for a man after the Law, and after the judgment of the Babylonian captivity – Daniel . Each of these men are noted for their “righteousness,” which would have delivered them from Divine judgment.
- **WISDOM.** He third mentioning of Daniel is one of Divine sarcasm. Through Ezekiel, God rebukes the king of Tyre, who bore the traits of the devil himself. The Lord chides him for his overestimation of himself. “Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel ; there is no secret that they can hide from thee” (Ezek. 28:30). He had also set his heart “as the heart of God,” like the devil, seeking to exalt himself above the Most High. At the peak of his pretentious wisdom, God would bring him down “to the sides of the pit” (vs 6-11). He was NOT wiser than Daniel!

The Lord Jesus

In one of His most controversial teachings, the Olivet discourse, Jesus referred to a prophecy of Daniel. Both Matthew and Mark record the statement. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand;) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains . . . “But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains” (Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14). Please refer to the earlier comments I have made on these references (Jesus Refers to Daniel, Page 4).

Thus, we are introduced to the prophet Daniel, one of the great spiritual nobles in God’s working of salvation in the midst of the earth. He was faithful when he was young, and when he was old as well. He an appointed example for young, middle-ages, and older men!

JEHOIAKIM KING OF JUDAH

“ Dan 1:1a In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah . . . ” Jehoiakim was an evil man, and the eighteenth king of Judah. He was the son of a good king, Josiah, but did not follow in the steps of his father. He is described as one “that which was evil in the sight of the Lord” (2 Kgs 24:19), and committing many “abominations” (2 Chron 36:8).

JEHOIAKIM IS MADE KING

He did not ascend to the throne by the normal means of succession. Following the death of his father Josiah, his younger brother Jehoahaz was made king by the people of the land (2 Kgs 23:30). That brother was also called “Shallum” (Jer 22:11). He also did “that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord” (2 Kgs 23:32). Thus, the godly king Josiah had at least two evil sons, something for which many would criticize him. The God of Josiah, however, did not speak against him for this grievous circumstance.

During the brief three month reign of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim’s brother, (2 Kgs 23:31), “Pharaoh Neco imprisoned him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a fine of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold” (2 Kgs 23:33). That tax levy, according to our measures, would have been 375 tons of silver and 3-3/4 tons of gold (a “talent” being 3-3/4 tons).

It was at this point that the reigning monarch of Egypt made Jehoiakim king in the place of his father Josiah. This involved a change of name for the older son of Josiah. Previous his name was

Eliakim. The Pharaoh changed it to Jehoiakim. As it is written, “ And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim . But he took Jehoahaz away and brought him to Egypt, and he died there” NKJV (2 Kgs 23:34).

In order to pay the Egyptian Pharaoh the tax he had levied on the land of Judah, Jehoiakim “exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaohnechoh.” All of this began when Jehoiakim was twenty-five years of age. His reign lasted eleven years (2 Kgs 23:35-36).

During his reign, Nebuchadnezzar came up against the people of Judah. This resulted in Jehoiakim becoming a servant to Nebuchadnezzar for three years. After those three years, he changed his mind and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kgs 24:1). During his days it is written, “And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets” (2 Kgs 24:2).

JEREMIAH SPEAKS AGAINST HIM

The prophet Jeremiah was raised up by God during the reign of this king. “It came also in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah . . . Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer 1:3-5). It was at that time, during the reign of Jehoiakim, that God appointed Jeremiah to be “over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant” (1:10). This circumstance accentuated the wickedness of Jehoiakim who, though the king, was not used of God as was Jeremiah. God found another man He could use during Jehoiakim’s reign.

Opposed Jeremiah

In the fourth year of Jehoiakim’s reign, Jeremiah soundly denounced the king and the people for not giving heed to the words sent to them from God. He announced that God was going to bring Nebuchadnezzar, His servant, against the of land of Judah. The whole matter did not set well with Jehoiakim. It is written, “And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death” (Jer 26:21). When one of the prophets who was a contemporary of Jeremiah, Urijah, heard the prophesy, he was afraid, and fled to Egypt. Jehoiakim, displaying his obstinance, sent to Egypt, brought Urijah back, “slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people” (Jer 26:23).

Built Himself a House

Revealing his prideful heart, Jehoiakim built for himself expensive and ornate royal buildings. Jeremiah rebuked him because he did so by forcing his own people to do the work without giving them wages (Jer 22:13-17). Thus the Lord spoke to this wicked king through Jeremiah, “Therefore thus says

the LORD in regard to Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah, They will not lament for him: 'Alas, my brother!' or, 'Alas, sister!' They will not lament for him: 'Alas for the master!' or, 'Alas for his splendor!' He will be buried with a donkey's burial, Dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem” NASB (Jer 22:18-19).

Burns Jeremiah's Books

In my judgment, the most prideful and despicable act of Jehoiakim was when he burned the books of the prophet Jeremiah. The event took place in the fifth year of the reign of Jehoiakim. One year prior to the event, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, God had directed Jeremiah, “Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin” (Jer 36:2-3). The prophet called for his scribe, Baruch , “who wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book” (36:4).

Because Jeremiah was in prison (33:1), and could not go to the house of the Lord, he directed Baruch to read “the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD'S house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities” (36:6). Faithfully, Baruch went to the house of the Lord, and read the words of the book “in the Lord's house” (36:8). Later, in ninth month of the fifth year of Jehoiakim's reign, a “fast before the Lord” was declared. People then came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem. As directed by Jeremiah previously, Baruch again read the prophecies that had been given to Jeremiah. He made sure all of the people heard the words, for Jeremiah had hoped they would be stirred to repentance when they heard them. “Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house, in the ears of all the people” (36:10).

A man named Micaiah heard the reading, and went “down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber.” Finding “all of the princes” sitting there, he “declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people” (36:11-13). As a result, all of the princes sent “Jehudi, an officer in Jehoiakim's court, to Baruch, “saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come” (36:14). Immediately, and in fulfillment of the directive of Jeremiah, Baruch took the manuscript in his hand and went to them. After hearing the prophetic words of Jeremiah, the princes were afraid and said, “We will surely tell the king of all these words.” Before telling the king, they asked Baruch, ““Tell us please, how did you write all these words? Was it at his dictation?” Then Baruch said to them, ‘He dictated all these words to me, and I wrote them with ink on the book.’” NASB Knowing these words would not set well with the king, they instructed Baruch to hide himself and Jeremiah, telling no man where they were (36:17-19).

At this point, they went into the king's court to give the report. However, “they stored the scroll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe,” before telling all of the words to the king. Upon hearing the report, Jehoiakim sent Jehudi to get the scroll, bring it to his house, and read it before himself and all

the princes. Jehudi promptly did as he was commanded.

While the prophetic words were being read, a point is made of the time and place: “Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him” (36:22). After Jehudi had read three or four “leaves” of the scroll, in an act of defiance, the king took the scribe’s knife (“penknife”), cut the leaves from the scroll, and threw them in the fire. He continued to do this “until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.” Prior to this, everyone who had heard the words of Jeremiah’s prophecies were afraid. At this occasion, however, when the writings were burned in an act of rebellion, it is written, “Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.” Yet, three princes of the court “made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.” Instead of listening to them, Jehoiakim commanded them “to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them” (36:24-26).

Following this event, the word of the Lord came again to Jeremiah. “Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.” The Lord then commanded Jeremiah to deliver an stunning word to Jehoiakim . “Thus saith the LORD ; Thou hast burned this roll , saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast? Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not ” (36:29-31).

Thus, Daniel records the precise fulfillment of the judgment spoken against Jehoiakim, insolent king of Judah, who dared to burn the prophecies of Jeremiah.

I have taken the time to briefly elaborate on Jehoiakim for a reason. The Word of God is not a series of unrelated writings and isolated events. It is a record that reflects the “eternal purpose” of the Lord. Therefore, no part of Scripture is obsolete. Things that took place have been “written for our learning” (Rom 15:4). But there is more to it than that. These events have actually been orchestrated by God in order to teach us of His ways. As it is written , “Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come” NASB (1 Cor 10:11).

If we fail to see this pivotal reality, we will lose the benefit of the Word of God. Believers must free themselves from the shackles of academia when reading the Bible. That is why it cannot be approached with a merely hypothetical mind set. It must be read in faith, and with a mind to see the ways of the Lord as He works among men. This is the manner in which I will be addressing this marvelous book.

INTRODUCTION TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR

“ 1b . . . Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon . . . ” Nebuchadnezzar is not only a key figure in the book of Daniel, he is prominent in God’s dealings with the children of Israel. This king is mentioned ninety-one times in the Scriptures: sixty as “Nebuchadnezzar,” and thirty-one, in the KJV, as Nebuchadrezzar.” It is thought that the latter form (“Nebuchadrezzar”) is the Babylonian form of his name, while the former, and most common form, is the Aramaic translation of his name. Intl Std Encyclopedia Like Pharaoh, he was raised up to bring glory to God Ex 9:16; Rom 9:17). His name is mentioned in Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Thirty-nine times, in Second Kings, Second Chronicles, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, he is called “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.” That is because Babylon figures prominently in God’s dealings with Israel. That prominence was achieved during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

Showing his employment by the living God, the Scriptures refer to “the hand of Nebuchadnezzar” (1 Chron 6:15; Ezra 5:12; Jer 21:7; 22:25; 29:21; 32:28; 44:30; 46:26; 27:6; Ezek 30:10). This expression denotes God using Nebuchadnezzar to fulfill His own will. The Lord did things “by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.” Thus, his role in history is owing strictly to the purpose of God. The Lord therefore refers to him no less than three times as “My servant” (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 43:10).

TOKEN OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

Nebuchadnezzar’s extensive rule was given to him by God Almighty. He did not rise up by human strength, or according to the wisdom of this world. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (Psa 24:1), and that includes all of its kings and princes. Thus it is written, “And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him” (Jer 27:6). And again, “ I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also” (Jer 28:14). Daniel boldly declared to Nebuchadnezzar, “for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (Dan 2:37). He proclaimed to Belshazzar, “the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor” (Dan 5:18).

Jeremiah was told how Nebuchadnezzar would come and “smite the land of Egypt” (Jer 46:13; 43:11). Ezekiel further defined that event by saying God would “give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon.” He went on to say Egypt was given to the king as “wages for his army.” What Nebuchadnezzar had done, God said, “they wrought for me” (Ezek 29:18-20). It was the Lord Himself who “carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar” (1 Chron 6:15).

Not only were all things given to Nebuchadnezzar, including worldly dominions, the duration of his dominion was also determined by God. “And all the nations shall serve him, and his son, and his

grandson, until the time of his own land comes ; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant” NASB (Jer 27:6-7).

This Must Be Seen

Here is an aspect of this book that must be seen: that “The kingdom is the Lord’s, and He is the Governor among the nations” (Psa 22:28). He is, in truth, “the King of all the earth,” and reigns “over the heathen” (Psa 47:7-80. This is why God is called “Most High” (Gen 14:18; Deut 32:8; Dan 4:17) and “Almighty” (Rev 11:17). It is not that God merely has the capacity to rule, He DOES rule : “His kingdom ruleth over all” (Psa 103:19). Daniel revealed that God rules “IN the kingdom of men” (Dan 4:17,25). Ultimately , it is His will that is being carried out.

HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT

The sources of information concerning Nebuchadnezzar are numerous. Concerning his role in the fulfillment of God’s purpose, we have the books of Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. There are also about 500 tablets dating back to his reign, inscriptions on around thirty buildings from his time, , and fragments from Erosus, Meander, Megasthenes, Abydenus, and Alexander Polyhistor, who are cited by Josephus and Eusebius. Intl Std Bible Encyclopedia

From these sources we learn that he succeeded his father, a Chaldean prince named Nabopolassar. His reign extended from 604 BC until 561 BC. He headed up the army that defeated Pharaoh-Neco, the head of Egypt (Jer 46:2). He made shrines to Marduk, Nebo, Zarpinet, Shamash, Sin, Gula, Ramman, Mah, and other heathen gods. He laid out and paved a great street for the procession of Marduk, and built a great number of walls and moats. He also dug several deep canals and made dams for flooding the country to the North and South of Babylon, thereby protecting it from their enemies. He also made large bronze bulls and serpents, adorning many temples with elaborate cedar and gold.

His refined construction projects seemed to reach their apex in the hanging gardens of Babylon, which are considered the second of the seven wonders of the world. According to historical records, they were built by Nebuchadnezzar to please his wife, who was a Mede; to remind her of her mountainous homeland. Groliers Encyclopedia refers to him as “the most important of the Chaldean, or Neo-Babylonian, kings.”

WHY MENTION THESE THINGS?

The empire of Babylon, that reached its vertex in Nebuchadnezzar’s time, then began to diminish, according to the prophecy of Daniel. This was not a mere coincidence. The purpose for the preeminence of Babylon was served when Nebuchadnezzar had finished the work God used him to accomplish. Everything else about Nebuchadnezzar was merely incidental. That is why the Scriptures make nothing of what history chooses to accentuate. No mention is made of the hanging gardens, or the numerous temples and structures he built – even though they have been uncovered through various excavations. This is because they had no bearing on what God was doing.

Some might question the value of mentioning these various historical matters. It is certainly not that they have a value of their own. Rather, they serve to confirm to our hearts the worthlessness of things unrelated to the purpose of God. It is the manner of God to elaborate only on matters that bear directly upon the execution of His purpose. The world, and all that is associated with it, has no other reason for existing. Kings and empires are but pawns on the trestle board of Divine purpose.

Whether we are considering the tower of Babel, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, or Darius, they are placed within the setting of Divine purpose. It may be heads of nations like Cain, Nimrod, Ishmael, and Esau – they only have significance within the purpose of God! Such political leaders as Caesar Augustus, Herod, Pilate, Felix, and Agrippa, are only as prominent as their role in the fulfillment of the will of the Lord. This is an underlying premise that can be seen throughout the Scriptures, and it fairly glows with celestial glory in the book of Daniel.

Thus, throughout our journey through the book of Daniel, we will behold Nebuchadnezzar as an instrument in the hand of the Lord. His only glory is found in the fulfillment of God’s purpose. We will not stand and marvel at his architectural achievements, or the great image of solid gold that he made, ninety feet high and ten feet wide (Dan 3:1). Instead, we will glory in the precise and effective workings of the Lord God Almighty, unto whom we have been reconciled by the death of Christ Jesus.

We will focus on the hand of the Lord in the book of Daniel – His great working!

INTRODUCTION TO THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

The Babylonian captivity is of great significance in Scripture. It was prophesied by Moses (Deut 28:49), Isaiah (Isa 39:6), Jeremiah (Jer 13:19; 20:4-5; 32:28), and Habakkuk (Hab 1:6). Isaiah prophesied this captivity to king Hezekiah. “And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon : nothing shall be left, saith the LORD” (1 Kgs 20:16-17). Jeremiah foretold it to Pashur, the chief governor of the house of God. “For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon , and shall slay them with the sword” (Jer 20:4). As already mentioned, it was a point of reference included in the genealogy of our blessed Lord – “the carrying away into Babylon” (Matt 1:17).

A JUDGMENT FROM GOD

The Babylonian captivity was a particular judgment against Israel. It was incurred because of their refusal to honor the land sabbaths required by the Lord. There is considerable profit to be realized from a knowledge of this judgment.

Declared by Moses

The possibility of this judgment was announced by Moses when delivering the Law to the children of Israel. The law requiring the land sabbath is given in Leviticus 25:2-3. "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD . Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard."

If Israel refused to fulfill this requirement, God was quite specific about the results that would ensue. "And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it" (Lev 26:33-35). Those who imagine God has no regard for details, or for precise obedience, do well to consider this Divine commitment.

The Commandment Disobeyed

From the reign of king Saul until the captivity was four hundred and ninety years. During that nearly five century long period, Israel did not honor the seventh year sabbath for the land. Many entire generations passed, supposing that all was well, and it was really of no consequence to do what God had commanded. Thus, with no apparent twinge of conscience, Israel lived just as though a commandment concerning the land had not even been uttered.

To be particular, four hundred and ninety years passed without a single sabbath year being honored. That means seventy land sabbath years were ignored.

However, the actions of men are never overlooked by the Lord – particularly when they are rebellious against Him. Those who imagine that can escape the judgment of God by pretending He has said nothing to them are treading on a most dangerous road.

The Time of Noah

God tolerated the world of Noah for a long time. But the time came when He could no longer abide their insolence. The striving of His Holy Spirit was brought to an abrupt end, and He sent a flood

to “destroy all flesh” (Gen 6:12-17).

The Tower of Babel

The united people in the plain of Shinar thought to ignore God by making a name for themselves. Their activities, however, eventually passed beyond the border of Divine longsuffering, and He brought their work to a grinding halt, and scattered them throughout the world (Gen 11:7-8).

Sodom and Gomorrah

The people in Sodom and Gomorrah lived in sinful indulgence until their manners could no longer be tolerated by God. In a single day they reaped the whirlwind for their iniquity, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Gen 19:24-26; Jude 1:7).

In the Babylonian captivity, we have a similar situation. The people have grown comfortable ignoring the commandment of the Lord. Generations have passed without it being obeyed. Perhaps it seemed too inconsequential to them. Beside that, nearly five hundred years had passed with no apparent consequence for their disobedient manners. How foolish, indeed, to imagine God does not take note of all who ignore His Word!

Jeremiah Sounds the Word

The prophet Jeremiah was raised up by God to announce the Babylonian captivity, and the reason for it. The book of Second Chronicles declares the circumstance. “And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years ” (2 Chron 36:20-21).

The duration of the captivity was confirmed by Jeremiah in his book. “And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished , that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations” (Jer 25:11-12). And again, “For thus saith the LORD, 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).

The manner in which Jeremiah repeatedly referred to this captivity underscores the fact that it was a Divine judgment. Through him, the Lord saw to it that Israel did not begin to think of this seventy year period as mere happenstance, or the result of a weak king or inferior military powers. Here is a fair sampling of some of his words.

- “I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon” (20:4).
- “Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labors thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon” (20:5).
- “Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city” (Jer 21:4).
- “And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath” (21:5).
- “I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon” (21:7).
- “For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire” (21:10).
- “And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans” (22:25).
- “Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land” (25:9).
- “And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him” (27:6).
- “Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon” (29:21).
- “Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it” (32:3).
- “Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it” (32:28).

They Were Not to Resist

It was a hard message to give, and more difficult still for the Israelites to receive. All of this was compounded by the word given to Jeremiah concerning how the people were to react to the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans. They were not to resist or fight back! They were to submit, yielding to the yoke of Babylon. Solemnly Jeremiah told Zedekiah, “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon” (Jer 27:12-13). If they resisted the Chaldeans, or fought against them, Jeremiah declared “ye shall not prosper” (Jer 32:5).

THE LESSON TO BE LEARNED

If ever there was a generation that needed to learn from this account, it is our generation. Daniel testifies loudly to all men, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). A generation with a penchant for self-gratification will do well to ponder the Babylonian captivity. The Holy Spirit has said much about it, and that for a reason. The Queen of the South will rise up against those who had access to superior wisdom, yet did not avail themselves of it (Matt 12:42). The men of Nineveh will rise up in judgment against those who were told of repentance, yet continued in their

stubborn ways (Matty 12:41). How much more will those carried away in the Babylonian captivity rise up to condemn a generation who heard of their experience, yet chose to ignore the Word of the Lord! God plays no games with mortals! Men do well to take His word seriously.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR BESIEGES JERUSALEM

“1c . . . came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.” In identifying the time of his deportation to Babylon, Daniel mentions when “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.”

NO ORDINARY CITY

Jerusalem was no ordinary city! It is the city called “holy” (Isa 4:3), destined to be called “a city of truth” (Zech 8:3). It is called “the city of the great King” (Psa 48:2), “The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth” (Lam 2:15), “the throne of the Lord” (Jer 3:17), “the holy city” (Neh 11:1; Matt 4:5), and the city where God chose to “put” His “name” (1 Kgs 11:36). This is the city in which kings reigned, including David and Solomon. The child Jesus was dedicated in this city (Lk 2:22). This is where young Jesus was first perceived as exceedingly wise, though but twelve years of age (Lk 2:41-45). It is where He was betrayed and tried (Lk 9:51; John 12:12). Here is where the Gospel was first preached (Acts 2).

For the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to be destroyed is one thing. It is quite another for Jerusalem to be besieged. It is one thing for Tyre and Sidon to be overthrown. It is something else for Jerusalem to be besieged. When we read of Jericho being conquered, we are not surprised. But we are deeply effected when we read of Jerusalem being besieged!

This city is mentioned in Scripture more than any other city in all the world: eight hundred and eleven times ! Nineveh was a “great city,” yet is only mentioned eighteen times in the Word of God. Babylon, even including all of the parabolic references to it, is only mentioned two hundred and eighty-six times. The “eternal city” of Rome is only mentioned nine times. Bethlehem, of such prominence in Christ’s entrance into the world, is only mentioned thirty nine times in the Bible.

Jerusalem is first mentioned in the book of Joshua. After that it is cited in Judges, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, and Malachi. The New Testament Scriptures mention “Jerusalem” one hundred and forty-four times. It is difficult to imagine a city being any more prominent – and it is ALWAYS related to what the Lord is doing.

Why Mention This?

All of this may seem to be only an academic bypath, but that is far from what I intend. Here is a city of great significance in the Divine economy. It is a place with which God associated Himself, and it is related with unparalleled blessing and promise. If such things automatically protect a city or a person, surely nothing evil will ever come upon Jerusalem! At least, that is what some theology would lead us to believe.

The besiegement of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity strike a decisive blow against a strain of theology that has plagued the church for centuries, Here is a chosen city, a blessed city, a city where God placed His name. Yet, the judgment of God was leveled against that city when it failed to take Him seriously! It stands as a memorial to the truth, “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Pet 4:17). It ought to shout loudly to a lethargic and slumbering church, that if it does not repent, judgment is on the horizon! When Jeremiah announced the overthrow of the holy city, there were some who simply thought it could not happen – not to the holy city! Instead they said, “Sword and famine shall not be in this land” (Jer 14:15).

Nebuchadnezzar’s besiegement of Jerusalem is frequently mentioned. It is a judgment the Lord did not want His people to forget. It also took place in several stages. “At that time (during the reign of Jehoiakim’s son Jehoiachin) the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it” (2 Kgs 24:10-11). “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, (during the reign of Zedekiah) and pitched against it: and they built forts against it round about” (2 Kgs 25:1).

The besiegement to which Daniel alludes is referenced in 2 Kings 24:1-2. During this time, Daniel was brought to Babylon. It is also the first time we hear about him.

GOD GIVES THE KING TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR

“ 2a . . . And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand . . . ” Other versions read, “And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand,” NIV “The Lord let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into his power,” NRSV and “The Lord handed over to him Jehoiakim.” NAB What appeared to be military superiority was actually Divine sovereignty in action. Like Pilate, Nebuchadnezzar had no power but that which was given to him by the Lord. Daniel is not writing an autobiography or a history book, for this bit of knowledge is not available on those levels. His writing is inspired by God, and

therefore is filled with Divine assessments, judgments, and explanations.

THE EXERCISE OF SOVEREIGNTY

The Lord “gave” king Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand. Daniel often mentions this aspect of Divine government.

- He told Nebuchadnezzar God had “given” him his kingdom (2:37-38).
- When the king was chastened, God is said to have “given” him a “beast’s heart” (4:16).
- Belshazzar’s kingdom was “given to the Medes” (5:28).
- One of the great governments shown to Daniel was described as being like a lion with eagles wings, “and a man’s heart was given unto it” (7:4).
- Another kingdom is described as a leopard, “and dominion was given to it” (7:6).
- The Messiah is described as coming in the clouds of heaven, being “given” dominion, glory, and a kingdom (7:14).
- Judgment was “given to the saints of the most High” (7:22).
- An opponent of the saints was “given” to wear out the saints for a determined period of time (7:25).
- The kingdom in all of its greatness will be “given to the people of the saints of the most High” (7:27).
- A “host” is said to be “given” to one who cast down the truth to the ground (8:12).
- A personality identified as the “king of the South” would have a great multitude “given into his hand” (11:11).
- God “gave knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom” to Daniel and his three colleagues (1:17).
- He “gave” Nebuchadnezzar “majesty” (5:19).

Great works and changes among man are traced to what the Lord has done. As the “Governor among the nations,” He gives things men are powerless to implement.

- He gave Israel favor in the eyes of the Egyptians (Ex 11:3; 12:36).
- He gave a populated land to Israel (Josh 21:43).
- He gave Israel rest from their enemies (Josh 21:44).
- The Lord gave conception to Ruth (Ruth 4:13).
- He gave Solomon wisdom (1 Kgs 5:12).
- He gave Job twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10).
- God gave Saul another heart (1 Sam 10:9).
- He gave fourteen sons and three daughters to Heman (1 Chron 25:5).

It should startle no person, therefore, that “the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah ” into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. By that, the Scripture means Jehoiakim had no choice in the matter. He could not alter the Divine decision, or avoid becoming subject to Nebuchadnezzar. All of his resources and authority could not change the Divine edict. His wisdom was of no avail. He may have been a king, but the Almighty God was King over him! He could send for Urijah in Egypt and slay him with the sword, but he could not stop Nebuchadnezzar from conquering him. He could burn the books of Jeremiah, but he could not avoid being given to king of Babylon. Like all worldly powers, he was impotent before the God of heaven.

Thus it is written, “In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years” (2 Kgs 24:1). Again it is written, “Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon” (2 Chron 36:5). Jeremiah told Jehoiakim of this coming disaster. “Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof ” (2 Kgs 25:1,9).

A MUCH NEGLECTED TEACHING

Although this is a much neglected aspect of the Divine nature, Jesus taught us to rely upon it. “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever . Amen” (Matt 6:13). If God can deliver men INTO the hands of others, He can also deliver them FROM their oppressors. However, if these things are not known, deliverance will not be sought.

The book of Daniel begins, therefore, with a solemn assertion of how God changed the circumstances of His people – and it was not pleasant. It involved the besieging of their holy city, the killing of some of their citizens, the destruction of the temple, the devastation of the walls about the city, and the binding and servitude of their kings. All of that is involved in Jehoiakim being “given” into the hands of a heathen despot!

The Working of the Lord

I want to again emphasize that this book is a commentary on the working of the Lord. It is more than a foretelling of the rise and fall of nations, the coming of moral tyrants, and the overcoming of God’s people. It is not mere history in advance.

In this volume we will be given to see HOW the Lord works – the manner in which He fulfills His will. We will behold how He deals with those who refuse to obey Him, and how exactly and precisely He carries out his desires for His people, as well as those who are against them. Daniel records Divine activity!

PART OF THE VESSELS TAKEN

“ 2b . . . with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to

the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.” It is tragic to hear of Jehoiakim being given into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, together with the people over whom he ruled. It is more tragic to hear of the desecration of the sacred artifacts of the temple. However, even in this matter, we will behold Divine control. The Lord not only ordained this plunder, He determined its degree!

PART OF THE VESSELS

“ . . . with part of the vessels .” Emphasizing that all of the vessels were not taken simultaneously, other versions read “some of vessels,” or “articles.” NKJV/NASB Even in the plundering of the holy city, God remained in control.

The Vessels Themselves

These are vessels used in the temple service, and were originally instituted by the Lord for the accomplishment of the sacred service and worship of God. They were not common, were not used for common purposes, and were used only by the sanctified servants of God for purposes ordained by Him. There were several kinds of vessels, each of profound craftsmanship and materials.

- There were various vessels related to the table of showbread. They included dishes, spoons, covers, and bowls (Ex 25:29).
- There was the golden candlestick, which had bowls for oil, snuffers, and trays (Ex 25:31-39).
- The massive altar of sacrifice also had vessels. They included pans, shovels, basins, fleshhooks, and fire pans (Ex 27:3).

All of these were originally called “the vessels of the tabernacle” (Ex 27:19), and were anointed, being consecrated to the Lord. Primary articles of furniture were referred to as “And the table and all his vessels , and the candlestick and his vessels , and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels , and the laver and his foot” (Ex 30:27-30).

Solomon Adds to Them

Later, when Solomon built the temple, he also had vessels made which were wholly given to the Lord. Some of them are described as “the pots, and the shovels, and the basins: and all these vessels.” We are told they were “exceeding many,” made of brightly shined brass (1 Kgs 7:47). Revealing the magnitude and value of the vessels pertaining to the house of God, it is also written of Solomon: “And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the LORD: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the showbread was, and the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs of gold, and the bowls, and the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, to wit, of the temple” (1 Kgs 7:48-50). All of these things were placed into “the treasures of the house of the LORD” (1 Kgs 7:51). In addition, “all the holy vessels” that were originally in the tabernacle were added to the treasures (1 Kgs 8:4).

Often Removed

Although they were sacred, these “vessels” were removed from the temple several times. When Shishak king of Egypt came against Jerusalem, “he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made” (1 Kgs 14:25-26).

When Joash, king of Israel, captured Amaziah, King of Judah, he broke down part of the wall of Jerusalem and “took all the gold and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obbedom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria” (2 Chron 25:24).

Wicked king Ahaz “gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem” (2 Chron 28:24). These vessels were prepared, sanctified, and restored during the reign of Hezekiah, which accounts for Nebuchadnezzar again having access to them (2 Chron 29:18-19).

Now Nebuchadnezzar again takes these sacred vessels. This theft is also mentioned frequently. “And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD” (2 Kgs 24:13). The mentioning of “all of the treasures” does not conflict with our text, which says “part of the vessels.” The plundering of the temple took place in phases. The phase of the above passage took place after Jehoiakim, during the reign of his son, and was the final “sweep”

of the temple for its treasures.

Again it is written, “Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon” (2 Chron 36:7). Additional references include 2 Chronicles 36:10,18; Ezra 1:7; Jeremiah 27:21-22. Some further details are provided in Jeremiah 52:18-19. “The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away. And the basins, and the firepans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; that which was of gold in gold, and that which was of silver in silver, took the captain of the guard away.”

This event will be of significance later in the book. Belshazzar will further desecrate these vessels by calling for them to be brought to a drunken feast, in order that his nobles might drink wine from them. That event will be very significant.

THE LAND OF SHINAR

“. . . into the land of Shinar.” Those who are familiar with Scripture will immediately recognize this land. It is first mentioned in the tenth chapter of Genesis. It was here that Nimrod, “the mighty hunter before the Lord,” established his kingdom. There he established “Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh” (Gen 10:9-10). Asshur went out of that country and later built the now infamous Nineveh (Gen 10:11).

The land is best known as the place where certain nomads settled, saying “‘Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.’ They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth’” NKJV (Gen 11:3-40). Because their efforts excluded the living God, He aborted their work, confounding their language, and scattered them throughout the earth (Gen 11:5-9).

Now, in Daniel’s time, the land was again teeming with activity under the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. I have often wondered if they had ever pondered the ancient scattering, or if they even knew about it. As though the territory itself was a citadel of the wicked one, no one had profitably learned from the dispersion of Babel. The people were once again arrogant, worshiping other gods, and even desecrating the holy vessels of the Lord. Yet, these were the people God would use to chasten Israel.

THE HOUSE OF HIS GOD

“. . . to the house of his god.” The ultimate insult is dealt to the people of God when the sacred vessels of the temple are transported to the house, or temple, of a heathen god – “the treasure house of his god.” Our verse mentions this blasphemous deed twice: “which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god ; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god .” If a jewel in a swine’s snout is uncomely (Prov 11:22), you can imagine the reproach associated with holy vessels of God being found in the house of a heathen, lifeless, and dumb idol!

It is generally understood that this god was Bel, mentioned by Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isaiah points to the impotency of Bel . “Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity ” (Isa 46:1). Jeremiah affirms that when Babylon was taken, Bel would be “confounded” (Jer 50:2). God also said through him, “I will punish Bel in Babylon” (Jer 51:44).

Bel was a sun god, to whom great reviving power was attributed. He was also known as Merodach (Jer 50:2), and, in history, as Marduk.

Nebuchadnezzar’s son, who reigned for two years immediately after him, was named “Evilmerodach,” or “Evil-Merodach – meaning, “a man of Marduk,” or follower of the god Bel (2 Kgs

25:27; Jer 52:31). He is the king who liberated Jehoiachin (Jehoiakim's son) from a thirty-seven year confinement in prison, giving him a seat of honor above all the other kings that were with him in Babylon. Notwithstanding, history confirms he was slain by his sister's brother, who was named Nergalshar-ucur.

The point of these brief observations is that Bel could not keep Nebuchadnezzar from his Divinely appointed demise, or his son from being murdered. It may be said of Nebuchadnezzar's god, as of all other false gods, "Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing: their molten images are wind and confusion" (Isa 41:29). How true the Psalmist was when he wrote, "Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them" (Psa 115:-4-8).

Not Their Final Place

The house of Nebuchadnezzar's god would not be the ultimate resting place for the vessels dedicated to the living God! Later, in Ezra's day, every single one of those vessels would be returned to their proper place. Thus it is written, "And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God" (Ezra 6:5).

A few years after this mandate, Nehemiah, governor of Judah, found ordinary household items belonging to Tobiah in the temple chamber. Of that occasion he wrote, "Then I commanded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat offering and the frankincense" (Neh 13:9). The Lord was behind this restoration.

CONCLUSION

The stage is now set for the unfolding of Daniel's remarkably long and insightful ministry. It took place during a period of captivity, and in a heathen land. His work as a prophet unfolded amidst trials and tests. Daniel bears some resemblance to John the Revelator, who received profound insight while in exile on Patmos. Daniel also received remarkable visions and explanations of Divine workings while he was in exile . Men may move the saints from the peaceful habitations, but they cannot move them where they cannot hear from God! Those who maintain their faith will continue to have access to God!

Chastening Does Not Remove Hope

We learn from this book that the chastening of the Lord does not close the doors of heaven, or induct a rime of hopelessness. Those who continue to believe God will be given to see the things of God, even during Divine judgments – perhaps even in an unusual way.

The Innocent Sometimes Suffer

We also learn from this book that faithful people are sometimes caught in the punishment that is being administered to others. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were young, yet faithful. Yet they were carried away in the Babylonian captivity. Sometimes believers do suffer because of the sins of others.

Favor in the Eyes of the Enemy

Additionally, we will see that God can grant His faithful servants favor in the eyes of those who have no personal regard for the true God, in whose hands their lives are held. All four of the young men introduced in the first chapter of Daniel obtained remarkable favor in the eyes of the king. They were promoted to political prominence, as Jews, in a strange and hostile land.

A Challenging Book

This is a book that will challenge the most disciplined and sanctified intellect. Things are unfolded concerning nations and kings that are by no means simplistic. For those who seek a challenge for the mind, the book of Daniel will rise to the occasion. Your ransomed powers are well employed in this sacred volume.

Blessing for the Faithful

Finally, it will again be seen that those who keep the faith under duress will be granted unusual and profitable insight and understanding. Trouble does not separate us from God! The book will give you a strong reason to cleave to the Lord.

THE FIRST GREAT TEST OF FAITH

INTRODUCTION

Lesson #2

THE WAYS OF GOD

As we enter into the record of the first great test of faith, it is important that we again get our spiritual bearings. When we read and study books like Daniel, we must mortify the human propensity to classify Divinely recorded events as history – in this case, Jewish history. As commonly defined, there is history in Scripture – but that is not its thrust. Strictly speaking, the Bible is not a record of human history as much as it is the workings of the Lord. This is precisely why vast periods of human history are often scanned with very little comment. The first two thousand years of human history, for example, are covered in less than eleven chapters of the Bible (Gen 1:1-11:25). More chapters (nearly fourteen) are devoted to the life of Abraham than that (Gen 11:26-25:9) – one hundred and seventy-five years (Gen 25:7). Even then, we know hardly anything about the first seventy-five years of Abraham’s (then Abram) life. Thus, fourteen chapters of the book of beginnings is devoted to a record of ninety-five years of Abraham’s life, while eleven chapters are devoted to a brief overview of over two thousand years.

This is a Divine manner, and must be duly noted by students of Scripture. Those who are devoted to the study of history cannot deal with interruptions of vast periods of time, or to anything less than a continuous record. Normally, history has little meaning if little attention is given to successive details.

THE DIVINE MANNER

It is the Divine manner to put the emphasis on pivotal things – things that determine outcomes, and around which central decisions and occasions gather. Whether we are speaking of the masses of people, as in the flood and prior to Abraham, or the life of Jesus Christ, the spotlight of inspiration is always on things through which God made a difference. There is a heavenly emphasis in Scripture. If it is not seen, Scripture will not be properly understood, and lasting benefits will not be realized.

I use the term “Divine manners” in the sense of the “ways” of God – how He works within the affairs of humanity. You may recall that the Lord acquainted Moses with His “ways,” while the people were only familiar with His works. Thus we read, “He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel” (Psa 103:7).

I suggest to you that God’s “ways” are revealed to us in the book of Daniel: in particular, in the incident that will now be placed before us. Because this is the case, I will make several observations about this record that point to the ways of the Lord. These observations are not departures from the text. Rather, they are a way of putting a handle on it, so it can be carried with profit in the heart and mind.

THE STAMP OF DIVINITY

The book of Daniel has the stamp of Divinity upon it, and is extraordinary from several points of view. It is in the very midst of these extraordinary occurrences that the working of the Lord is declared. In order to set the stage for the text before us, it will be good to consider some of these things.

EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

- Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are captivated by a heathen king (1:1-6).
- Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are educated in the Babylon court (1:5).
- Nebuchadnezzar worships Daniel (2:46).
- Nebuchadnezzar makes Daniel the ruler over the whole province of Babylon (2:48).
- All people are required to fall down and worship a golden image (3:3).
- Darius makes Daniel the first among his presidents (6:1-3).
- Because of his excellent spirit, Darius considered setting Daniel over the whole realm (6:3).
- Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian (6:28).

EXTRAORDINARY MIRACLES

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego delivered from the fiery furnace (3:23-29).
- Belshazzar makes Daniel the third ruler of the kingdom (5:29).
- For a period of thirty days, whoever asked anything of any God or man but Nebuchadnezzar would be cast into a den of lions (6:7).
- Daniel is delivered from the lion's den (6:21-27).
- In a single hour, Nebuchadnezzar is given a beast's heart, begins dwelling seven years with the beasts, eats grass, his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle, and nails became like a bird's claws (4:16,25, 33).
- The fingers of a man's hand writes on the wall of the king's palace (5:5).
- In one night, Belshazzar is slain, ending the Babylonian kingdom, and the Medes take the kingdom (5:30-31).

EXTRAORDINARY DREAMS AND VISIONS

- Dream of a great statue that was crushed to dust by a stone cut out without hands (2:31-45)
- Dream of a great tree that was cut down, leaving its stump and roots (4:1-17).
- Vision of four differing beasts rising out of the sea (7:1-8)
- Vision of the day of judgment (7:9-10).
- Vision of the coming of One like the Son of man in the clouds of heaven (7:13-14).
- Vision of a ram with two horns pushing westward, northward and southward (8:3-4).
- Vision of a he goat from the west, with a notable horn between his eyes, which smote the ram and became very great (8:5-7).
- Vision of four prominent horns that came out of the ram's broken horn (8:8).

- Vision of a little horn that arose from the four horns, waxing great and magnifying himself (8:9-12).
- Vision of a man clothed in linen, girded with a belt of pure gold (10:5).

EXTRAORDINARY EXPLANATIONS

- Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image destroyed by a stone (2:30-45).
- Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a tree that was cut down (4:19-27).
- An angel interprets Daniel's vision of the four beasts (7:16-28).
- An angel interprets Daniel's vision of the ram and he goat (8:16-26).
- An angel interprets the vision Daniel had by the side of the river (10:8-21).

EXTRAORDINARY SCOPE

The book of Daniel has unusual scope, of breadth.

- The dynasties of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, and Darius are covered.
- A number of kingdoms are mentioned. Judah (1:1), Israel (9:7), Babylon (1:1), Chaldeans (5:30), Media (8:20), Persia (10:1), Greece (11:2), Egypt (11:8), Lybia (11:43), Ethiopia (11:43).
- The time of world kingdoms is outlined (2:30-45; 8:16-26).
- Details of the Messiah's death are described (9:25-26).
- Circumstances attending the time of "the end" are spelled out (7:9-10; 7:13-14; 12:1-10).

LEARNING HOW TO THINK

Those who Live by faith think differently from other people. They are not turned aside by the circumstances, even though they are extraordinary. Faith thrives in trouble, and hope flourishes when everything seems to be against the believer. The will of the Lord cannot be neutralized by difficulty or oppression. These realities are lived out in the book of Daniel.

Although Daniel is young, away from home, separated from his parents, in a heathen land, and marked out to serve an idol-worshipping king, he survives . He not only survives, he flourishes . During such times he receives unparalleled revelations from God, and interpretations are given to him from heaven. The angels of God minister to him, explain to him, and deliver him.

The book of Daniel confirms “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39). If such marvelous benefits could be realized by four young men in Babylon, what is possible for you today? They were blessed in unprecedented ways before Christ Jesus, before the sins of the world were taken away, and before the world was reconciled to God. Their benefits were realized before the devil was destroyed, before principalities and powers were plundered, and before men were given the “Spirit of adoption.”

Thus, as we approach this first test of the faith of Daniel and his three colleagues, I encourage you to be perceptive. Look for the hand of the Lord, and behold how He works for them who trust in Him “before the sons of men” (Psa 31:19). This book, and this particular occasion, is written “To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom” (Psa 145:12).

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

As in all of Scripture, the book of Daniel unveils Divine providence. I refer to the secret, but purposeful, working of God, whereby two great objectives are accomplished. First and foremost, He is “working salvation in the earth” (Psa 74:12), orchestrating the affairs of men in order to accomplish His own magnificent purpose. Secondly, He is working all things together for the good of those upon whom He has set His love, or who have found grace in His eyes. In both the accomplishment of His purpose, and the good of His people, nothing is left strictly in the hands of men. Even though, from outward appearance, it may seem as though men are in charge of the matter, yet it is the Lord who works in them both to will and to do of His own good pleasure (Phil 2:13). Solomon said it this way, “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” (Prov 16:33). Later versions read, “But its every decision is from the LORD,” NKJV/NASB/NIV and “but the decision is wholly from the LORD.” NRSV Another version reads, “When the lot is cast into the lap, its decision depends entirely on the LORD.” NAB

The providence of God involves the overturning of some human decisions, and the establishment of others. Some examples will suffice to establish this critical point.

- It was God who worked in the circumstances of Joseph, overturning the counsel of his brothers, and establishing him as prince over Egypt (Gen 45:5-8; 50:20).
- The Lord overturned Pharaoh’s decision to keep Israel, showing both Israel and the Egyptians that He alone is God (Ex 14:4).
- God hardened the hearts of nations so they would come against Israel and be destroyed by them (Josh 11:19-20).
- God sent an evil spirit between Abimilech and the children of Shechum (Judges 9:23).
- The Lord appointed the defeat of the sound counsel of Ahithophel so that He might bring evil upon Absalom (2 Sam 17:14).
- When Samson sought a wife from among the heathen, the cause was actually from the Lord, who sought an occasion against the Philistines (Judges 14:4).
- When David numbered Israel, resulting in a great plague, it is written that GOD “moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah” (2 Sam 24:1).
- The Lord stirred up adversaries against Solomon (1 Kings 11:14,23).
- God stirred up “the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh” (1 Chron 5:26).
- When Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the older men, and hearkened not to the people, “the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Neat” (2 Chron 10:13-15).
- The Lord “stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia,” to build the house of the Lord (2 Chron 36:22).
- When the enemies of the Jews tried to stop them from building the house of God, “the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease” (Ezra 5:4-5).
- In the days of Ezra, when the people kept the feast of unleavened bread, the Lord “turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God” (Ezra 6:22).
- In the case of the Babylonian captivity, at its peak during the time of our text, God said, “and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon” (Jer 20:4).

Whether in nature or among men, all things are orchestrated, or held together, by the hand of the Lord. He is working behind the scenes for His own glory, and the good of those who dare to trust in Him. If we fail to see this in the book of Daniel, it’s value will not be realized. We are being exposed to the working of the Lord, and that is how it must be seen.

WHAT ABOUT FREE WILL?

Immediately, some will ask about the “free will of man.” How does that fit into these things. You would think that the way men speak about “the free will of man” surely confirms it is an emphasis in Scripture. However, this is not at all the case. In fact, the term, as normally used, is not even found in Scripture – not a single time. It is NEVER the subject of Divine exposition. We read about “the heart of man” (1 Cor 2:9), “the spirit of man” (1 Cor 2:11), “the wrath of man” (James 1:20), and “the glory of man” (1 Pet 1:24). However, we NEVER read of “the free will of man.” The Spirit does speak of “the will of man,” but in quite another way. The new birth is said to be NOT “of the will of man” (John 1:13). The Scriptures themselves are said to have come in old time NOT “by the will of man” (1 Pet 1:21).

Rather, the responsibility of men is encapsulated in words like “receive” (Acts 8:14; 1 Thess 2:13), “believe” (John 1:12; Rom 1:16), and “obey” (Acts 5:32; Heb 5:9). In this way, the emphasis is not placed upon the capacities of men, but on their responsibility and accountability to God. Sin has infected all human capacities, creating the condition of fallenness (Rom 3:23). For this reason, Apostolic doctrine deals with the renewal and

empowerment of those capacities, and not the capacities themselves.

My intention is not to aimlessly address the matter of the human will, which itself is an aspect of the Divine imagery with men. My point is that the human will is not the subject of exposition in Scripture. Truth is never bent around the presence of man's will. Rather, it is always within the perimeter of God's will.

Sixteen times, the word "freewill" is applied to offerings – offerings that were determined by the giver instead of a hard law (Lev 22:18,21; 22:23; 23:38; Num 15:3; 29:39; Deut 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23; 2 Chron 31:14; Ezra 1:4; 3:5; 7:16; 8:28; Psa 119:108). Once it is used of those who determined of their own will to go up to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:13).

Throughout Scripture, the will that determines, decides, or arbitrates, is the will of God. It is the peculiar prerogative of faith to bring us into accord with the "good and acceptable, and perfect will of God." A failure to see this circumstance casts a cloud of mystery and confusion over the entirety of God's Word. God can, and does, impose His will upon men. He did upon the entire world in the flood (Gen 7:21), the builders at Babel (Gen 11:8), Pharaoh (Psa 136:15), the people of Egypt (Ex 3:21; 12:36), and the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:25). In the Babylonian captivity God imposed His will upon Judah (Dan 1:2; Isa 42:24). He imposed it upon Belshazzar, stripping his kingdom from him (Dan 5:22-30). He also did so upon Nebuchadnezzar by giving him the heart of a beast, and removing all rationality from him for a season (Dan 4:16,32).

A parade of other witnesses could be summoned before us to attest of this fact: namely, that God can and does impose His will upon certain people. Herod (Acts 12:20-23), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 10:1-10), and many disobedient Corinthians could testify to this truth (1 Cor 11:29-30).

It is quite true that God does not impose His will upon men in the matter of salvation. He does, however, deliver a Gospel to them which is His "power unto salvation" (Rom 1:16). Through that glorious Gospel, and the belief of it, the people become "willing in the day of His power" (Psa 110:3).

The Relevance of These Observations

These few remarks ARE relevant to our study of Daniel. In this book, God will orchestrate the affairs of men, often moving upon their wills, to fulfill His will. The particular point to be seen is that all of this is done to give His people the advantage, and to bless them with blessing. That is, in fact, the very point that must be seen in the text before us.

Working upon the hearts and minds of men, the Lord is moving Daniel into a place of extended prominence. God will put Daniel where He intends for him to be, working through Nebuchadnezzar, the prince of his eunuchs, Belshazzar, Cyrus, and Darius. The affairs of the world are being ordered for the ultimate glory of God, and the fulfillment of His appointed purpose.

Thus, Daniel's promotions, though implemented through the edicts of kings of the earth, really came from the Lord. He was the One shaping the circumstances. Thus it is written, "For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another" (Psa 75:6).

A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY

There are many magnificent prophecies in this book. Yet, if they are not perceived as the Lord fulfilling His own purpose, they will be viewed as intrusions into God's purpose, rather than the execution of it. They will be seen without regard to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. They will also tend to produce fear, even moving men to adopt ridiculous theologies in order to assuage their unbelieving hearts. It is not uncommon for men to take the prophecies of Daniel and formulate dogmas about nations rather than proclamations of the Lord's doing. Such men shine the spotlight on earthly rulers with scarcely a thought about them being raised up and put down by the Living God.

The way to avoid these erroneous conclusions is to behold the working of the Lord in the very beginning of this marvelous book. If we can see His hand clearly here, it will not be difficult to believe His hand will be seen just as clearly in the outworking of the prophecies made known through Daniel.

Let novel views of Scripture be cast from us forthrightly and with zeal, particular regarding the book of Daniel. Look for God's working, believing it is all for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Let God confirm to you His care for you!

A FOCUSED COMMAND IS GIVEN

“ 1:3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes . . . ” Ever keep before you that we are witnessing the unfolding of Divine purpose. God is working through the king and the master of his eunuchs to fulfill His own will. He will prepare Daniel to both receive and communicate insight into Divine workings. Our text is showing us the Divine prelude – how personalities and events were purposefully orchestrated for God's own purpose. Nebuchadnezzar unquestionably thought the whole matter proceeded from his own mind, and the “master of his eunuchs” undoubtedly thought the same. It is wholly improper, however, for those with “the mind of Christ” to think in such a manner. God does not finish what men begin, and men do not finish what God begins. That is fundamental to sound thinking! The Lord is not simply taking something conceived by Nebuchadnezzar and turning it into something good for Daniel. Rather, He is turning the king's heart, directing it “like a watercourse wherever He pleases” NIV (Prov 21:1).

CALLED IN A DISCIPLINED PROCEDURE

On the surface, the first part of Daniel is wholly historical. Yet, as I have pointed out, it is actually a record of God Himself working things together for the ultimate good of the four Hebrew children.

There is nothing slipshod about the working of the Lord. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are called within the framework of a disciplined procedure. They did not wander into the king's court, or seek by some other means to gain an advantage with the king. The king spoke to the person responsible for the care of these young boys. He directed him to bring specific children to him. They were to be “of the children of Israel” – deported Jews. Only selected boys from this group were acceptable: “of the king's seed, and of the princes.”

Such children were mentioned by Jeremiah. Such were “of the seed royal, and the princes of the king” (Jer 41:1). Certain children in Scripture were identified as “the king's seed,” or children of a kingly lineage. Thus Hadad the Edomite is described as “of the king's seed in Edom” (1 Kgs 11:14).

PRECISE PROPHECY FULFILLED

This episode is the fulfillment of a prophecy delivered to Hezekiah by the prophet Isaiah. It was delivered shortly after the extension of Hezekiah's life, which thing occurred in answer to his prayer. King Hezekiah was “sick unto death,” and Isaiah had come to him saying, “Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live” (2 Kgs 20:1) . Immediately, the king turned his face to the wall, fervently pleading with the Lord to consider how he had walked faithfully before Him. Before Isaiah “was gone out into the middle court . . . the word of the LORD came to him” (20:2-4). He was instructed to go back to Hezekiah and tell him his prayers had been heard.

As a consequence, the Lord added fifteen years to his life, and delivered him out of the hand of the king of Assyria, defending the city of Jerusalem for His own name's sake. The sickness Hezekiah had apparently involved an inflammatory tumor, or boil. Thus, Isaiah instructed him “Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered (20:5-8).

It is ironic that during his illness, Hezekiah had heard from the king of Babylon. It is written, “At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick” (20:12). In response, Hezekiah “showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not” (20:13). It was because of this misjudgment that Isaiah delivered a scathing prophecy to Hezekiah, showing that he did not do well to consider the Babylonians worthy of such treatment. After some dialog between Hezekiah and Isaiah, the prophet delivered the following prophecy.

“Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (2 Kgs 20:17-18; Isa 39:6-7). Ezekiel also referred to this. “Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; and hath taken of the king's seed . . . ” (Ezek 17:12-13). Now, over one hundred years later, Daniel unfolds what the Lord did with that circumstance. What was a period of judgment for Israel became a time of unparalleled opportunity for Daniel. As in the time of Balaam, “God turned the curse into a blessing” (Deut 23:5).

Our text is recounting things that resulted from that very captivity: some of the king's sons and princes would be taken away to become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Now, in this very text, Isaiah's prophecy is being fulfilled in remarkable detail.

Whether this means Daniel was immediately related to Hezekiah, we do not know. His lineage, however, was from a princely order. The point to be seen is the precise manner in which the word of the Lord was being fulfilled. Daniel will be given advantage during the fulfillment of a prophetic word – a fulfillment that was not of itself pleasant. How unsearchable are God’s judgments!

THERE ARE DEMANDING REQUIREMENTS

“ 4a Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science . . . ” The requirements set forth by the king were most demanding. Not only was a proper lineage required, personal abilities, achievements, and appearance were essential. Keep in mind, these are the requirements within which four notable young men will rise to prominence. Those who meet extraordinary requirements are extraordinary individuals.

Keep the unusual circumstances in mind. This was a time of Divine chastening. The children of Judah had been captured, taken from their homeland, and housed in heathen surroundings. Yet, the conditions that are to be found in them indicate they were not living in despair, had not given up, and were still mentally and spiritually active. It is one thing to flourish under ideal circumstances. It is quite another to maintain comely qualities during times of great oppression and isolation from the things one loves and values. It is not unusual for professed believers to lose all of their comeliness during trials and afflictions. But you will find no such degeneration in the four Hebrew children.

Faith Always Triumphs

The book of Daniel confirms that faith always triumphs. It can keep the soul in a foreign land, maintain a hold on God, and stand the test of time. Numerous examples of this are found in Scripture, and we do well to ponder them.

- Noah in a degenerate world.
- Abraham among heathen peoples.
- Joseph in Egypt.
- Israel in Egyptian bondage.
- Moses in Egypt.
- Jeremiah in a pit.
- Ezekiel in Babylon.
- Paul in a Roman prison.

The people of God will be tempted to imagine faith can only function during pleasing circumstances. Thus some professed believers are greatly cast down by their seeming misfortunes. They wonder why such things have happened to them, and begin to struggle with fear and doubt. However, the notion that ideal conditions are the only realm where blessing is sure, is not a true postulate. This whim is an enemy to both mind and soul. Faith is not changed by circumstance, but has in it the power to change the circumstances.

You will find no such attitudes among the believers revealed in this book. There is not a syllable of cynicism or pessimism credited to the four Hebrew captives. They maintained their faith, a good countenance, and strong assurance – even when they were young and captives in Babylon. The king was not looking for captives huddled in corners of despair, and he did not find such children in Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Let me underscore that the king was looking for extraordinary “children.” The word translated “children” means “a lad, boy, or young child.” STRONG This is not the same word translated “children of Israel.” In that expression, “children” refers to the general offspring of someone, without regard to their age. In our text, the word “children” emphasizes tender age prior to adulthood. This is the word used to describe Isaac before he was “weaned” (Gen 21:8). It is the word used to describe Jacob’s very young children who were “tender” (Gen 33:13). It is even the word used to describe baby Moses when he was providentially found by Pharaoh’s daughter (Ex 2:6). To get our bearings, the parallel Greek word (**Te,knon** , tenon) is used to describe Jesus when He was twelve years old (Lk 2:48).

Nebuchadnezzar has commissioned a search to be made among very young boys. While we do not know their exact age, some have estimated them to be between fifteen and eighteen. That seems to be on the high end. I prefer the view others espouse, who see them as being between thirteen and fifteen. I do not want you to be distracted by these considerations. Perhaps they will assist us to see how unusually God works – among the young, a class of people so sorely neglected by the contemporary church.

The king, therefore, is looking for young and tender youth who can be molded to his seeming advantage. He is intending to shape them to the

Babylonian pattern. Behind the scenes, however, the Lord is manipulating the situation to elevate certain of his people to places of prominence. In this case, they are very young people. Let every young person take heart as we uncover the working of the Lord among tender youth.

NO BLEMISH

“Children in whom was no blemish.” Other versions read “no defect,” NASB and “without any physical defect.” NIV They had to be of sound body. I am careful to approach this matter knowing that physical appearance is not the basis upon which Divine choices are always made. There are, however, certain occasions in which they were pivotal. I understand these to be incidents of moral and spiritual tutelage that point to higher truths. Allow me to illustrate this point.

Jewish Sacrifices

The sacrifices under the Law had to be “without blemish” (Ex 12:5; 29:1; Lev 1:3; 6:6). There was a time when God severely upbraided Israel for ignoring this qualification. They offered animals to God that had defects, and were judged because of it. “And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts . . . ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD” (Mal 1:8,13). Thus God taught the people of the necessity of offering the best to the Lord, not things that had been rejected for normal purposes.

The Priesthood

Those who served God in the office of the priest could not have physical defects. Those, for example, who approached “the bread of God,” serving in the capacity of a priest, had to be free from physical defects. “Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, or a man that is brokenfooted, or broken handed, or crookbacked, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken; no man that hath a blemish of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he hath a blemish; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy. Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the LORD do sanctify them” (Lev 21:17-23).

This served as an example of the coming “holy priesthood” that would be realized in Christ Jesus (1 Pet 2:5).

It appears to me that God would not allow Daniel and the three Hebrew children to be His emissaries in Babylon, while failing to measure to the qualifications of His servants under the covenant to which they were subject.

WELL FAVORED

“ . . . but well favored . . . ” Other versions read “good-looking,” NKJV “handsome,” NIV “of good appearance,” WEBSTER “of goodly countenance,” DARBY and “beautiful in appearance” SEPTUAGINT The idea behind the expression “well favored” is that God Himself had blessed the lads with a comely appearance. A pleasing appearance is given by God.

There are other people in Scripture who are said to be “well favored,” or blessed of God with a beautiful appearance.

- The daughters of men (Gen 6:2).
- Sarai (Gen 12:11,14).
- Rebekah (Gen 24:16).
- Rachel (Gen 29:17).
- Joseph (Gen 39:6).
- Saul (1 Sam 9:2).
- David (1 Sam 16:12).
- Abigail (1 Sam 25:3).
- Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2).
- Absalom (2 Sam 14:25).
- Tamar (2 Sam 14:27).
- Abishag (1 Kings 1:3-4).
- Adonijah (1 Kings 1:6).
- Esther (Esth 2:7).
- The daughters of Job (Job 42:15).

Those familiar with Scripture will recognize that beauty was the downfall of some people (Absalom), while others were exploited because of

their appearance (Bathsheba). The point to be seen is that those with a comely appearance are to see it as a gift from God. As with all gifts, this is to be used for the honor and glory of God. It is not to be allowed to neutralize ones affection for and devotion to the Lord.

Thus far we see the king is looking for young men with a sound body, and with a handsome and undistracting appearance.

SKILLFUL IN ALL WISDOM

“ . . . skillful in all wisdom . . . ” Other versions read “gifted in all wisdom,” NKJV “showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom,” NASB “showing aptitude for every kind of learning,” NIV “trained in all wisdom,” BBE and “well versed in every branch of learning.” NLT

When you consider the possible age of those who will be discovered in this quest, this is a most remarkable requirement. In a day when lopsided wisdom is extolled, and specialists are lauded, it is refreshing to hear of anyone showing “intelligence in every branch of wisdom.” The phrase “every branch of wisdom” would include categories like horticulture, biology, language, etc. Solomon had such knowledge without having to learn it through conventional processes (1 Kgs 4:29-34). Later we will find that God had especially blessed Daniel and his friends with their extraordinary abilities. “As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom” (Dan 1:17).

The notion that understanding and wisdom are wholly unrelated to the work of the Lord is not true. We know this is the case, because God Himself gave this ability, thereby sanctifying it for His own use and purpose.

Those with extraordinary abilities ought to give them to the Lord, for they have been given to them by Him. It is disappointing to me that it is so common for gifted and attractive people to give these qualities to the world, rather than to the Lord. Much of the dreadful mediocrity that plagues the contemporary church is owing to this tendency and circumstance.

Men who were noted for their wisdom include Joseph (Acts 7:10), Moses (Acts 7:22), Bezaleel (Ex 31:3), Aholiab (Ex 31:6), Hiram (1 Kgs 7:13-14), Solomon (1 Kgs 3:28), Ezra (Ezra 7:25), and Paul (2 Pet 3:15). God used them all for His own glory. It is in order for the children of God to seek to excel in this area. In the work of the Lord, mediocrity, is never an asset. This is particularly true when that condition exists by choice.

CUNNING IN KNOWLEDGE

“ . . . and cunning in knowledge.”

Other versions read “possessing knowledge,” NKJV “endowed with understanding,” NASB “well informed,” NIV “acute in knowledge,” DOUAY and “quick to learn.” NAB

This expression emphasizes the ability to articulate knowledge, as opposed to simply knowing many things. Those possessing the ability to speak on, and elucidate, a wide variety of subjects are exceedingly rare – even among the older set. Yet, in our text, such individuals are sought among the youth. It is at this time that four young men of faith will surface. Since they were no doubt raised during a period of oppression, they had advanced in these areas under difficult and burdensome circumstances. Perhaps they had witnessed some of the atrocities that were associated with the sacking of Jerusalem and the captivity of its people. This would include such things as the killing of Zedekiah’s sons and the putting out of his eyes, and the killing of the princes of Judah (2 Kgs 25:7; Jer 52:10-11). Whether these young boys heard of such things, or actually witnessed them, it is remarkable that they kept their wits through it all. Many a person has lost their abilities under great stress and affliction. They have, in a sense, become another kind of people. However, the book of Daniel confirms that faith can sanctify human capacities even under duress and great difficulty.

In my judgment, the professing church would do well to endeavor to produce a spiritual environment in which such intellectual and expressive capabilities can be developed. Far too much religion gives no advantage to the mind, expressive abilities, or a wide latitude of capability. It is difficult for me to see such religion as being related to God in any significant way. If those living under the Law could provide such a culture, how much more is the church, which is the fulness of Christ, capable of doing so for the honor of God and Christ. Our churches should be incubators for the development of God-given gifts and abilities.

UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE

“ . . . understanding science.” Other versions read “quick to understand,” NKJV “discerning knowledge,” NASB “discerning,” NJB “endowed with knowledge and insight,” NRSV “prudent in judgment,” NAB and “good sense.” NLT

The word “science” means knowledge, or a body of knowledge. To “understand” science it so have the ability to grasp it. This involves seeing the whole picture, and the manner in which facets of knowledge relate to the particular compartment of knowledge that is being considered. Such

understanding goes beyond memorizing principles or theorems, like mathematical tables, or natural laws or principles. When a person “understands science,” or is “quick to understand,” they are able to use the knowledge wisely . Thus, a person who understands mathematics is able to solve mathematical problems. The individual who understands botany is able to grow and care for plants, making them productive.

This is a quality that is rarely found among adults, to say nothing of being prominent among children. Those who are moved about by statistics, as though they testified to reality, would never look among captive children for those who were “prudent in judgment,” or had acute abilities to use tools of mind and thought. However, even Nebuchadnezzar, who worshiped strange gods, engaged in such a search. I understand that he did so by Divine prompting, in order that these four young boys might be discovered. Yet, the endeavor did not seem strange to Nebuchadnezzar. It certainly should not seem strange to the saints of God.

There is something of significance to be learned here. How comely it would be if gifted young men could be discovered among those under the New Covenant.

How marvelous it would be to find young men among us who were “without any physical defect, of good appearance, versed in every branch of wisdom, well-informed, discerning, suitable for service at the royal court.” NJB The church cries out for the presence of such potential! May God raise up men who will look for such resources, then providing wholesome environments for their development.

EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES ARE REQUIRED

“ 4b . . . and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.” I ever want to keep before you what is developing before our minds. God is preparing to do a work within the kingdom of Babylon – in the very heart of its glory and power. Those who will be employed in this work must meet certain criteria. This is not a military exploit, like the conquering of Canaan: thus God will not use a shrewd military captain like Joshua. It is not a violent overthrow like that of the Philistines: thus a man endowed with great strength, like Samson, will not be sought.

The work God will do at this time involves wisdom, interpretations, prophecies, and direction. It will require courage, the ability to quickly grasp the situation, and the power to speak insightfully and boldly. Those who are called by God, therefore, must be adapted for the work into which He will lead them. That is the real reason for Nebuchadnezzar setting forth these requirements, even though he himself was not aware of it. This was God's way of readying four young men for a place in history that would fulfill His purpose, and bring encouragement to generations to come. If we do not discern this, the text will be nothing more than an interesting story for little children. However, rest assured, this account is filled with evidences of Divine manners that are to be appropriated by the heart .

ABILITY IN THEM

“ . . . and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace.” Other versions read , “who had ability for serving in the king's court,” NASB “qualified to serve in the king's palace,” NIV “competent to serve in the king's palace,” NRSV “able to take positions in the king's house,” BBE and “have the poise needed to serve in the royal palace.” NLT

It is one thing to possess “ability.” It is quite another for it to be seen by others. Ponder some of the abilities that have been noted in the Scriptures – abilities that were used by God to fulfill His purpose.

- Among the children of Benjamin, for example, there were seven hundred men who were left-handed. It is said of them, “every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss” (Judges 20:16). That ability had no place in a king's court, but gave the advantage to the army during the time of battle.
- Among the children of Issachar there “were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chron 12:32). They were able to give godly counsel during critical times.
- When Solomon became king, he knew the criticality of possessing the ability to govern the kingdom. He therefore prayed God would give him wisdom, making him “able to judge” so great a people (1 Kings 3:9).
- When describing the fighting men of the sons of Reuben, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, Scripture speaks of “men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war” (1 Chron 5:18).
- Warriors among the tribe of Zebulun were described as being “expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart” (1 Chron 12:33).

The point to be seen here is that God raises up people appropriate for the work He is doing, the place where it is to be accomplished, and the time during which it is being done.

We are living in a culture that does not think in terms of “ability.” In many facets of our society, the key factor has become appearance rather than aptitude. Thus we often have leaders that cannot lead, teachers that cannot teach, singers that cannot sing, and builders that cannot build. Unfortunately, this tendency has crept into the church, and the results have been disastrous. Academic credentials are often assigned a greater weight than spiritual gifts. Abilities given by God are thus ignored, while those willing to subscribe to this new manner are vaulted into places of religious prominence.

This manner is aggressively pursued even though there is a striking and consistent absence of it throughout the entirety of Scripture. No man or woman was ever chosen by God because of their earthly credentials. In fact, precious few of all Kingdom leaders ever possessed any earthly credentials at all.

Moses

Moses was “was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22). However, before God used him, he was removed from that environment for four long decades – a time during which he had no apparent opportunity to use Egyptian wisdom. When Moses led the people out of Egypt and gave them the Law, it was according to the ability God gave to him, not according to the wisdom of Egypt.

Paul

Churchmen are fond of citing Paul as an example of a highly educated man. However, his education was not obtained at the University of Tarsus, but at “the feet of Gamaliel,” a Pharisee and doctor of the Law of Moses (Acts 5:34; 22:3). Paul confessed he was “thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers.” NIV However, even in this matter, the Apostle abandoned any personal advantages gained during that time, counting them all but “dung” (Phil 3:8). In Ephesus, Paul did dispute daily in “the school of one Tyrannus” (Acts 19:9). However, as with Moses, when it came to the work of the Lord, it was according to the ability God had given to him.

Does not Denigrate Learning

This observation by no means denigrates systematic learning or education. That ought to be apparent, for our text is going to speak about disciplined learning. The point is that the opportunity was afforded in strict accord with the ABILITY of the young men – an ability that already existed, and was independent of anything acquired in Babylon.

Faith Brings Abilities to their Apex

One other observation should be made here. Faith brings God-given abilities to their apex. Take, for example, the writings of Peter and John: the Gospel of John, First, Second, and Third John, the Revelation, First Peter and Second Peter. Is there a person in all of the world that can read these books and conclude their writers were fishermen? Where is the person willing to affirm they are simplistic, on a grade-school level, or academically elemental? Will exposure to the book of Matthew lead anyone to the conclusion he was a lowly publican, or tax collector? Indeed not!

The astuteness and precision with which these men wrote was not owing to earthly credentials. Rather, their faith sanctified their minds, and gave them expressive abilities. In the words of Peter, they ministered according to “the ability which God giveth” (1 Pet 4:11).

The Case Before Us

The ability God gives becomes discernible to others. In this case, it will be apparent to the prince of the king’s eunuchs. That is because Divinely acquired abilities are to be used.

And what a marvelous ability is sought! It is the “ability to serve in the king's palace.” NKJV A certain competence was required that could adapt to a royal environment. Discipline and alertness would be required, as well as an interest in serving the king and bringing certain advantages to him. Do not fail to grasp this requirement. The king was looking for young men who could function in a society of cultured adults – even the king and his court.

God has now moved the king to look for such youth among the captive “children of Judah.” In preparation for this event, God has already cultured some young men for the call – even though they are probably unaware of it themselves.

The word “ability” (ability to stand in the king’s palace) emphasizes strength. In fact, the literal meaning of the word includes “might, power, or strength.” The requirement is one of vigor or fortitude. The idea is that these young men had to be able to survive being in the king’s palace. There would be certain demands placed upon them, and they must be able to stand up under them. Many a soul has chosen an occupation or task for which they proved incapable. Either they could not fulfill the requirements, or they became too discouraged to continue to be exposed to them. The young men chosen by Nebuchadnezzar had to be able to remain where they would be placed. This would involve how they thought, how they spoke, and how they responded.

THAT THEY MIGHT TEACH

“ . . . whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.” Other versions read, “language and literature of the Chaldeans,” NKJV and “to speak and write the language of the Chaldeans.” NJB

In my opinion, there is a reason why Nebuchadnezzar wanted these Jewish lads to meet such rigid qualifications. No doubt, he had in mind the ultimate influencing of the other captive Jews. He could win them over to his side through especially trained men taken from their own ranks. Perhaps he could send them back to Judah, pioneering a change of the whole Jewish culture to be but a branch of Babylon. One of the chief means of accomplishing this was to change the language and literature of the people. This, as I have said, was probably Nebuchadnezzar’s intention.

However, it was NOT the objective of the Lord, who was using Nebuchadnezzar for His own glorious purpose. The Lord was providing an occasion and circumstance in which He could freely make known His will to Daniel. Some of that will would then be announced to the world’s greatest ruler, in order that God might receive glory. The placement of Daniel in the king’s favor would also provide time for him to write the book of Daniel, which has, throughout the ages, proved to be a bright beacon to the people of God. It has revealed the real intention of worldly empires, and their ultimate demise. It has also confirmed that worldly powers eventually come against God, for which cause ALL of them will be decimated and brought to oblivion.

Language and Literature

It was the manner of great empires to have their own language and literature. It was designed to promote their own interests. How people talked and what they read was a means of identifying them. The Jews had their own language (Neh 13:24). A comparison was made between the Jews and other people by referring to their language. This Eliakim said to Rabshakeh, “Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews’ language in the ears of the people that are on the wall” (2 Kgs 18:26). Peoples were often identified by their language (Esth 1:22). When Israel was delivered from Egypt, they were said to have been delivered “from a people of strange language” (Psa 114:1). When Isaiah prophesied of an appointed change in Egypt he referred to a change in their language. “In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan” (Isa 19:18).

In Esther’s day, the king’s scribes prepared writings for all people. The reference to the Jewish people is interesting: “to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language” (Esth 8:9). Thus the Jews were distinguished by their writings and by their language. When Jeremiah prophesied the Babylonian captivity he said, “it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say” (Jer 5:15).

Thus Nebuchadnezzar seeks to conform the Jewish lads to the Babylonian way of life, that they might serve his purpose. However, he will learn later that the Most High rules, overturning rulers and purposes contrary to His own.

The Lesson to be Learned

There is a subtle lesson to be learned here. People are noted for their writings and their language. Those who seek to destroy a people, often do so by changing their writings and their language, thus adapting them to a different society.

This observation is of particular relevance in our day. The church, which is the body of Christ, is especially identified by its writings and its language. Those two things contribute to the uniqueness of the church of the Living God. What we read is different, and how we speak is different. When either, or both, of those things is changed, the people themselves can be changed. If the world can get the people of God to speak and write in the world’s language, they will change them.

I suggest that this is exactly what has happened in our time. The church has learned the language of the world, and it is seen in their writings. Whether we are speaking of musical language or literary language, there is too much of the world in much of what the church is saying. It has adopted a new and different vocabulary, being taught in the world’s court instead of “the courts of the Lord” (Psa 84:2). The contemporary church is being exposed more to the writings of the world than to the “holy Scriptures,” which are able to make men “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim 3:15).

When we are exposed to the language and literature of the world, it must always fall under the government of the language and literature of God. By that I mean worldly knowledge must be appropriated within the context of the knowledge of God and acquaintance with the scriptures. If this is not done, knowledge from an earthly perspective will taint the soul, corrupt the understanding, and begin the process of spiritual deterioration. I have witnessed this process numerous times, and it has proved to be a great discouragement to my spirit. Men and women who could have been great in the eyes of the Lord were reduced to a state of spiritual mediocrity because they possessed an improper balance of worldly knowledge.

We will see throughout this book that Daniel always gave the precedence to what he was taught by God. He will never tell us what he learned in the king's court. He will not comment on the various aspects of life among those being trained for the king's service. Nor, indeed, will he provide the details of the daily responsibilities of those chosen to stand in the king's court. He will, however, tell us what was revealed to him from heaven! He will never quote Babylonish literature, but will only reveal messages brought to him by heavenly representatives. When he obtains wisdom from literature, he will not refer to the books of Babylon, but to the books of the prophet Jeremiah (Dan 9:2). It is imperative that we learn from Daniel's manners. Although he will be summoned to the king's court, he will conduct himself there as a man of faith. In him, and with the consent of his will and dominance of his faith, heaven's court will be given the precedence over Nebuchadnezzar's court.

THE DAILY PROVISIONS ESTABLISHED

“ 5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.” Here the purpose of king Nebuchadnezzar is mentioned. That purpose, however, is not what drives the events that follow. It was actually God who was working behind the scenes, preparing the way for the extended and unusually productive ministry of Daniel. Circumstances found him in the land of the enemy, housed among those who were slated to serve the king of Babylon. All of these “circumstances,” however, are being worked together for the good of Daniel. We must have this in our mind as we review this text.

A DAILY PROVISION

“ And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank.” If the targeted boys were to stand before the king, they must become accustomed to the diet of the king. They will be given the same food eaten by the king, and drink the same wine he drank. That, at least, is the aim of the king. This plan, however, will only prove to be an opportunity for the faith of Daniel and his three associates to shine forth. Their true nobility, created by their faith, will now become very apparent.

Some have thought Nebuchadnezzar provided food and wine from his own table to weaken the wills of those who served him. Thus, they would feel more obligated to Babylon than to Jerusalem, and to Nebuchadnezzar than to God. Such benefits have often occasioned the fall of weak souls. That is why Solomon wrote, “When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat” (Prov 23:1-3).

While this presupposed intention of Nebuchadnezzar is quite possible, nothing in the text infers such a thing. It seems better to me to take the text as it stands, without attempting to merge it with Babylonian customs as declared by worldly history.

The thinking seems to be that of promoting superior health, appearance, wisdom, and perception. In the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, this could best be done by offering the best living style available in Babylon. He knew a “daily” regimen would serve his interests best, not a periodic or infrequent one.

Notwithstanding, as we will see, this whole event constitutes a test to the faith of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore, they will be required to recall and heed the words of king Solomon.

A Principle Is Seen

A principle can be seen here. It is important to see it. While the general and extended diet of the four Hebrew boys will now be what the king demands, their discipline will remain on a daily basis .

If Babylonish life was not lived on a cyclical basis, much more is spiritual life not on that basis. Many believers live such sporadic lives to the Lord, that scarcely a work of grace can be accomplished within them. They never seem to be close enough to the Lord for any significant change to be

wrought in them. This is NOT the manner of the Kingdom of God!

When Israel was journeying through the wilderness, they gathered their manna “daily” (Ex 16:5). Their leading was on a daily basis (Num 13:21). Their offerings to God were “daily,” included “daily meal offerings” and “daily burnt offerings” (Num 4:16; 29:6). David spoke of performing his vows to the Lord “daily” (Psa 61:8). The Lord loads us “daily” with “benefits” (Psa 68:19). David’s prayers were “daily” (Psa 86:3). The early church continued with one accord “daily” (Acts 2:46). The early Bereans searched the Scriptures “daily” (Acts 17:11). Paula said he died “daily” (1 Cor 15:31). Believers are exhorted to “exhort one another daily” (Heb 3:13).

Just as surely as the four Hebrew children were oriented for standing before the king by “daily” provisions, so the people of God are being oriented to dwell in the courts of the Lord by “daily” nourishment.

God will prepare the lads on a daily basis, even though they will not follow the diet of the king.

THREE YEARS

“ . . . so nourishing them three years.” Three years were assigned in which the young men could become expert in the literature and language of the Babylonians. For ordinary children, this would not be sufficient time. However, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were not ordinary children. They were extraordinary because they were of Abraham’s seed. They were also unusual because they were of the royal seed. Additionally, they were uncommon because they possessed unusual abilities. Finally, they were extraordinary because they had been chosen by God to administer in His name during these times. They will therefore do well in the three year period that is assigned for their further development.

A Lesson to be Learned

Because this book details the working of the Lord, the role of these boys is primarily one in His Kingdom. Even though they have been chosen by God, and will be fully equipped by Him, yet it will not all take place instantly. They will spend time developing their faith, and honing up their wisdom.

Great men of God have been noted for spending several years orienting them for their work.

- Elisha ministered to Elijah for approximately ten years before taking his place (1 Kgs 19:19-21; 2 Kgs 2:1-15).
- Based upon the Passover’s He observed (John 2:13,24; 6:4; 11:55), the Apostles were taught by Jesus for two to three years.
- Paul was taught by the resurrected Christ for three years before going up to Jerusalem to meet the Apostles (Gal 1:18).

The point is that the calling of God does not exclude the necessity of preparation. In certain segments of the Christian community, there is unwarranted naivete in this area. Some suppose that the calling of God is accompanied with instant enablements. While I do not deny such a thing is possible, it is not the kingdom norm. For example, after Timothy had been set apart to the work of God, and had received a gift for ministry, he was challenged to engage in a hearty effort.

- “Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Tim 1:6).
- “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15).
- “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1 Tim 4:14-15).

Why Mention This?

On the surface, it may appear as though I have been diverted from our text into an area of vain jangling. But that is not the case at all. If we remember the book of Daniel is not a mere record of history, but a record of the works of God, the record before us takes on a different color. In it, we are beholding how the Lord works. We are witnessing how He works with young men, preparing them for an life of faithful service to Himself.

It is the Lord’s manner to allow time for preparation, for His work is too extensive for men to rush into it.

It may be countered that Jesus instructed His disciples to avoid preparation when He said, “And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak” (Matt 10:18-19). However, there is a vast difference between being unprepared, and studying how you will answer a dignitary – particularly since Jesus did not give them the slightest hint about the manner in which they would be questioned, or how they would be asked to account for themselves. No Apostle ever stood before any earthly dignitary unprepared. The area in which they were prepared, however, was not in the area of speech making, but by tuning their hearts by faith, walking in the Spirit, and feeding their souls

on heavenly fare.

During the three year period, the subjects of our text will learn to depend more fully upon the Lord. They will not only be oriented to stand and minister in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, but to do so as representatives of the King of kings.

AT THE END

“ . . . that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.” Other versions read, “so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.” NKJV “at the end of which they were to enter the king’s personal service,” NASB “so that at the end of that time they could be stationed in the king’s court,” NRSV and “and, and then some of them would be made his advisers in the royal court.” NLT

There were a number of boys to be chosen for special assignment from among the captives of Judah. The criteria was strict, and yet not everyone who passed the entrance examination would finally stand in the king’s court . At the end of three years, a selection would be made within the already selected group. It would be something like, “many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14). Thus the NLT version reads, “some of them . . .” We also know this is the case by the wording of the next verse: “now **AMONG THESE** were . . .”

A PROPER FRAMEWORK

I cannot leave this section without observing how excellent this framework is for the working of the Lord. It is orderly, daily, and demanding. It required thought, preparation, and commitment. It involved calling, selection, and excellence. Proper responses necessitated faith, boldness and confidence. Are these not a superb environment for the working of the Lord to be made known? I suggest these conditions are not happenstance, but were ordered by God. They were surroundings made suitable for Divine intervention.

THE DIVINE FOCUS IS ON ONLY FOUR

“ 6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah . . . ”

We have no idea of the number of “children” involved in this search. Nor, indeed, is there a need for us to know. The Kingdom of God has nothing whatsoever to do with statistics, probabilities, and the likes. These highly taunted areas of thought are absurd to one seated in heavenly places. How foolish to speculate on the likelihood of finding four children among the captives of Judah who precisely met such rigid qualifications! Who is the statistician who can affirm the chances of such a thing taking place? God does not work according to probability. Rather, He deals with impossibilities. The words of Jesus apply here, even though they immediately addressed the matter of someone being “saved.” “With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible” (Mark 19:26). Situations that appear hopeless to men are the soil from which a robust hope springs! Seen from a heavenly perspective, it is just as likely to find four promising young men among the captives of Judah as it is for two brothers mending their nets to be called to the Apostleship. It is just as likely as a tax collector being called by Jesus while he was sitting “in the tax office!” NASB This is the Lord’s doing!

We do not know how long the quest for superior youths lasted, or how many were examined. Having identified the requirements under which God would use His servants, our attention is immediately turned to the four Hebrew lads. The Spirit will not waste our time with an extended commentary on “Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs.” He will not tell us of the possible disappointment that many of the young men have experienced, or how nervous they were under examination and interrogation. Our attention will now be turned to the ones through whom God will work – the ones He has chosen for Himself. This too is a Divine manner.

- Men might be captured by the stunning effects of the sons of God marrying the daughters of men, but God will look at Noah.
- Men may talk about Abimelech, king of Gerar, but God will speak of Abraham.
- Men may speak of Pharaoh, but God will speak of Moses.
- Men will be impressed by the giant Goliath, but God will focus our attention on a shepherd boy with a sling and five smooth stones.
- The conquering Philistines and their god may catch the attention of men, but God will point us to blinded Samson.
- Innovative Herod would draw the attention of men, but God will show us John the Baptist, clothed in camel’s hair.
- The reporters of this world would be impressed with the pomp of Felix and Agrippa, but the Spirit will show us Paul in shackles.

You must not miss this Divine manner – the way God walks us through the history of men. In our text, we are confronted with the most glorious kingdom in all of the world. The greatest monarch of the time has issued an order, and one of his princes is carrying it out. Yet, the Holy Spirit moves the inspired pen to direct us to think upon four young boys. They are not even free, as men count freedom. Yet, these are the ones through whom God will work, and therefore they are the ones He calls us to consider.

Those who imagine that background is everything must know this is the first time in all of the Bible these four children are mentioned. What can you tell us of their past accomplishments? At this point, all we know is that they were from Judah, of the royal seed, had been taken captive, and met the preliminary requirements set forth by the king.

For your own information, here are the meanings of their Hebrew names.

- “Daniel” – Judge of God or the judgment of God.
- “Hananiah” – Jah has favored, or one who has obtained mercy from God.
- “Mishael” – He is what God is, or required or demanded of God.
- “Azariah” – Jah has helped, or one whom God helps.

“Jah” is a name for the Lord, and is used in Psalm 68:4: “Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him.” The name means “the Lord most vehement,” and is a contraction for “Jehovah.” English versions of the Bible generally translate the word “LORD.” This abbreviated name of Deity is used fifty-two times in Scripture.

The very names of these four lads are a sort of commentary on God’s work through them. Through them, Divine judgment will be announced (“Judge of God”). The favor of the Lord will be upon them (“Jah has favored”). Divine qualities will be revealed in them (“He is what God is”). And the Lord will be their Helper (“Jah has helped”). The fact that they were given such names suggests a sort of prophecy of what they would become.

FROM THIS POINT ON

From this point on, everyone else in this book becomes incidental. God will show us what He can do with four young men in the palace of a king, in a heathen empire. They were relatively nothing before this, but suddenly they are vaulted into prominence.

DANIEL’S MANNER

There is one more thing to be seen in this text. Remember, these are the writings of Daniel. Note how he introduces himself to us. He does not identify his mother or his father. Although the requirement of the king uncovered that he was of noble lineage, he does not tell us what it was. Instead, he identifies himself in two unique ways. First, he was “of the children of Judah.” Second, he associates himself with “Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.”

Godly identity was sufficient. Since he is going to unveil the works of God, there is no need for him to shine the spotlight on himself or his past. Remember, he is writing these things long after the prince of the eunuch’s engaged in a search for children meeting the king’s requirements. Decades later, toward the end of his ministry, he will record these events. When he does, it is not coincidence that he speaks so modestly of himself when but a child. His heart has been so enraptured by Divine tutelage, that he is able to speak in such a way of his past, as not to turn our attention from the Lord.

SPECIAL NAMES ARE GIVEN TO THEM

“7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.” It is not improbable that the “prince of the eunuchs” changed the names of the lads to assist in removing their past from their thinking. Perhaps they would more readily adapt to the ways of Babylon if they had Babylonish names. This seemed to be a trend among conquerors. You may recall the “king of Egypt,” Pharaoh Necho, changed Eliakim’s name to “Jehoiakim” before making him a puppet king in Judah (2 Chron 36:4). When Nebuchadnezzar carried Jehoiachin, captive to Babylon, he appointed Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, as a puppet king in his place, changing his name to “Zedekiah” (2 Kgs 24:17). This, then, was the manner of heathen kings.

These new names were not given at the behest of Ashpenaz, but by order of the king. We know this from what Daniel writes later. “Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar” (5:12). Here are the suggested meanings of their new names. Scholars have found it difficult to precisely identify their meanings. They do, however, concur that they were given to honor the false god’s of the Babylonians.

- “Belteshazzar” – May Bel protect his life.
- “Shadrach” – Command of Aku, or the great scribe.
- “Meshach” – The servant of Sin, or guest of the king.
- “Abednego” – The servant of Nego, the Babylonian god of wisdom.

If you have ever been discontent with your name, consider the renaming of these four young men. You must remember that the person makes the name, and not the name the person!

Following this narrative, the “Daniel” is mentioned seventy-four times in his book. “Belteshazzar” is only mentioned ten times (2:26; 4:8,9,18,19, 5:12; 10:1). Most of the times Daniel is called by his Babylonish name, Nebuchadnezzar is speaking. The other times, the reference is to “Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar.” One other thing; when Nebuchadnezzar called for Daniel, he would say “let Daniel be called,” as though honoring his Hebrew name” (5:12). His Babylonish name was not honored in heaven. Angelic messengers consistently referred to him as “Daniel” (9:22; 10:11; 12:4).

“Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah” are mentioned three times after this (1:11,19; 2:17). “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego” are mentioned fourteen times after this (2:49; 3:12,13,14,16,19, 20,22,23,26,28,29,30). They are always mentioned together, never individually. When Daniel requested that they be placed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, he referred to them by their Babylonish names (2:49). However, when he gathered with them in prayer, he referred to them by their Hebrew names (Dan 2:17).

A LESSON TO BE LEARNED

It is possible that the change of names was calculated to leave the impression these young men were favored by the gods of Babylon. However, though young, they were not easily swayed – even by unusual favors. Solomon once said, “He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live” (Prov 15:27). We will find these lads were unwilling to displease their God because of the favors of a heathen king. They fought the good fight of faith, maintaining their integrity before the Lord. Even the most powerful among the heathen could not move them from God.

During my lifetime, I have witnessed several men and women forsake the work of the Lord because of what the world offered them. They were hasty to justify their abandonment of things most excellent for the baubles of this world. They had a choice before them – the work of the Lord, or a professional career. However, although given a clear choice in the matter, they chose a worldly profession, making a miserable mistake, and it was seen in the deterioration of both their sensitivity and values. I am speaking of people with spiritual understanding, who have been obviously gifted in ways that bring profit to the people of God. These are also people who sense the call of God upon their lives, and have doors of opportunity placed before them by Jesus, who has the “key of David.” However, to them, the world’s call was more loud.

There will come times when gifted and disciplined people will be courted by the world. They will seek to change their name, as it was, conforming them to the fashion of this world, which is passing away. I know from experience of this tactic of the evil one. I also have learned that during such times, one must extend himself to serve the Lord with more vigor and commitment than ever before. If circumstance leaves you in a spiritual Babylon, like the four children of Judah, then you must serve the Lord there. Your prayers must not be hindered, and your fellowship with kindred believers must not be diminished because you are in a strange land! You must pick up your spiritual pace when you are among the Babylonians – even when it is in a place of favor and seeming advantage. Your relationship to God must not suffer because you are in an uncomely place!

I can also tell you that God can provide an escape from the inferior domain. For myself, I waited thirty-four long years before it came. But when it did, I thought nothing of leaving a place of worldly prominence to be back in Jerusalem, doing the work of the Lord.

DANIEL PURPOSES IN HIS HEART

“ 8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” Again, there is no indication of the time involved, for that is not the point of the text. We are not told if the “prince of the eunuchs” told the boys about the diet appointed by the king, or if he simply began imposing it upon them. All of that is of little consequence.

The real point is how Daniel responded to the kingly appointment. Although Jeremiah had told the people to bend their wills to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 27:8-9), yet young Daniel was able to wisely consider what he should do.

WHAT ABOUT YIELDING TO AUTHORITY?

A sophist might suggest to Daniel that we are to submit to the higher powers, not resisting the will of the king, for all power is of God. The legalist would make an effort to enforce this rule upon the four lads, saying they ought to “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well” (1 Pet 2:13-14). Had not Solomon said, “My son, fear thou the LORD and the king” (Prov 24:21). He also said, “I counsel thee to keep the king’s commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God” (Eccl 8:2). Centuries later Paul would say to Titus, “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates” (Tit 3:1). Besides all this, God Himself had referred to Nebuchadnezzar as “My servant” (Jer 27:6). Surely his edict must be obeyed, and none should resist it! That is how a casuist, or fallacious reasoner, thinks – someone who is spiritually juvenile and without understanding.

The Christian community is plagued with teachers who seek to make the godly yield to the ungodly under certain conditions. They cite those who have been placed over others, and declare they are to be obeyed under any and all circumstances. They deal with all manner of associations from wives to husbands, children to parents, citizens to governors, and believers to elders, etc. The supposition is that they are subject to others by Divine mandate, and there is no valid exception to that arrangement.

But what will such people say to young Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Here they are in a foreign country. They are there by Divine appointment, under the chastising hand of God. The prophet of God has told the people not to resist Nebuchadnezzar. They have even been told to pray for the place where they have been relocated (Jer 29:7). Now, they are in a favored status, and have been assigned a certain diet from the king. Their future, it appears, depends upon yielding to the desires of the king – the king whom God is using to chasten their nation. Now, what is the godly thing to do? Particularly since they are young in the first place, and ought to rise up before the more mature (Lev 19:32). Thank God none of these self-made teachers were in the vicinity to counsel Daniel and his friends

The Lord will leave no doubt about this matter. He will cause the Holy Spirit to move a holy man to record this whole event, thereby dispelling the doubts and confusion caused by those “desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Tim 1:7). There are times when obeying those placed over us is NOT in order. In fact, there are times when it is sinful to do so!

HE PURPOSED IN HIS HEART

“But Daniel purposed in his heart . . .” Other versions read “made up his mind,” NASB “resolved not to,” NIV “come to the decision,” BBE and “was determined not to.” NJB We are not told when Daniel “purposed in his heart,” but it must have been early in his Babylonian experience.

Right here we strike at the heart of spiritual setbacks and defeat. The fall of many a believer is owing to the absence of godly resolve! There is a notion in the Christian community that God will not allow one of His children to do something wrong. He will keep them from all contamination and transgression, even doing so independently of their own volition and thought. But such notions are utter folly. The very first man and woman are a gigantic contradiction to this imposition upon sound thought.

No person has ever avoided sin without first purposing to do so. Further, those who are overcome by sin have reaped the results of their lack of purpose.

- Before Ruth found her way into the Messianic lineage, she first purposed, and then expressed, “for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me” (Ruth 1:16-17).
- Before Solomon built the temple, he first said, “behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father” (1 Kgs 5:5).
- The meticulous obedience of David was preceded by resolve: “I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments” (Psa 119:106).
- During the early days of the church, believers were admonished, “that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23).

Such a spirit is altogether too uncommon among the churches. That is precisely why defilement is spreading like a plague among them. Paul spoke of the person who “standeth steadfast in his heart” (1 Cor 7:37). David said he “purposed he would not transgress” with his “mouth” (Psa 17:3). Paul frequently acknowledged that he “purposed” to do things (Acts 19:31; 20:3; Rom 1:13).

Such purposing is living “unto the Lord” (Rom 14:8). It is acknowledging the Lord in all of our ways (Prov 3:5-6), and living by faith (Hab 2:4). Faith cannot survive in an ad hoc environment, where individuals live by fits and starts. God Himself purposes (Isa 14:24-27; 19:12; 23:9; 46:11; Eph 1:9; 3:11). It should not surprise us, therefore, that those who bear His image are also noted for purposing.

Purposes are made in the heart, and thus dominate the will and the mind. There is surely place for godly purposes among the people of God. Such noble intentions will soon evidence themselves in superior manners.

HE WOULD NOT DEFILE HIMSELF

“ . . . that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.”

Although young, Daniel knew a person could become defiled with the portion of someone else. Although chosen by God by virtue of being a Jew, and favored by God with unusual ability, God had made no provision for Daniel to be defiled. Being chosen by God does not exclude a person from normal Divine requirements. There was a higher law than that of Nebuchadnezzar!

The “king's meat” violated the laws of the Lord, and thus they would cause defilement. Either they fell in the category of “unclean,” or they had been offered to idols – and either class was strictly forbidden to the Jews (Lev 11:4-8; Ex 34:15-16). Once, when Israel ate things offered to Baal of Peor, the wrath of God was kindled against them (Num 25:2-3). Daniel must have been acquainted with this incident, as well as the dietary guidelines of the Law. Or, perhaps Daniel remembered how the entire race of man had been defiled by eating – when Adam disobeyed God by eating forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6; Rom 5:12).

There are some things to note in this text. These are particularly noteworthy in view of the ages of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

- Although he was young, Daniel was familiar with the manner of the Old Covenant, and the various prohibitions within it.
- Even though he was away from his homeland and taken from his family, yet his thinking was God-centered. He thought primarily of what would please God, not what would please the king.
- He thought in terms of the effect things would have upon him before the Lord.
- He had not been devastated by the Babylonian captivity, as others who were taken captive (Psa 137:1-2).
- He first determined to do what was right, then sought the best way in which that determination could be fulfilled.
- He was not changed by his environment.
- He was able to commune with his own heart, making firm resolves that would dominate how he lived.

HE REQUESTED OF THE PRINCE

“ . . . therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” Other versions read, “so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself,” NASB “and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way,” NIV and “so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself.” NRSV

This request would serve to introduce the “prince of the eunuchs” to the manner of Hebrew children, as directed by the Covenant given to them by God. It was not enough to merely learn the way of those in Babylon. The superior ways of the people of God could also be introduced to the Babylonians.

Here the gifts and abilities of young Daniel surface. He does not simply reject the king's daily provision without a word, but honors proper protocol. True wisdom seeks honorable means by which to carry out holy purposes. We know from the rest of this book that Daniel and his friends would not bow to a demand that contradicted their faith. Yet, Daniel sought to implement his purpose with the least amount of distracting friction. If his request would be honored, it would provide a way for him to demonstrate the blessing of God upon those who are obedient to Him. Daniel is thus providing an environment in which the Lord can work for His own glory, as well as Daniel's benefit.

It is far better to carry out the will of God in a peaceful environment, if at all possible. Thus it is written, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18). Long before Paul was moved to write that exhortation, Daniel was familiar with expressions like, “I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel” (1 Sam 20:19) , “seek peace, and pursue it” (Psa 34:14), “I am for peace” (Psa 120:7). The effect of Scriptural knowledge is evident in young Daniel , providing instruction for the young men and women of our time.

There would be challenges enough in Babylon without creating any unnecessary ones! Therefore, Daniel proceeds in wisdom. He is a glowing tribute to the wisdom of faith!

CONCLUSION

SIMILARITIES WITH EDEN

The occasion we have just reviewed is much like that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. A moral dilemma is created by what a person can eat. In both cases, an evaluation of the quandary is to be determined by the Word of the Lord. In Eden, the word was solitary, having only to do with the food before them. In Babylon, the Word of God was many sided, dealing with a variety of foods.

Temptation was involved in both cases. In Eden, the devil directly approached Eve, suggesting that God had not told them all the truth. In Babylon, the devil did not work directly, but through the edict of an earthly monarch. In Eden, the devil focused on the food itself. In Babylon, he was even more crafty, focusing on political protocol.

In both Eden and Babylon, the adversary of men chose what appeared to be a morally neutral matter – eating. He did not tempt Eve or Daniel with murder, theft, or some other form of moral debauchery. In both cases, however, he moved to cause the individuals to despise the Word of the Lord by either questioning it or forgetting it. Eve, though mature and free, failed the test. Daniel, though young and in captivity, passed the test.

THE CIRCUMSTANCE OF BELIEVERS

In many ways, we are in circumstances similar to those in which Daniel found himself. Because of this, there are many advantages that can be gained by an extended consideration of the text just reviewed.

- From the standpoint of what we ought to be, and will be, we are all young – “little children” (1 John 2:1, 18,28; 3:7,18).
- We are also in a foreign land, the earth, in which we are “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Pet 2:11).
- We are faced with demands from the world that contradict both faith and the Word that sustains faith (1 John 2:15-17).
- The devil often tempts us through those who have worldly authority over us, moving us to obey men who contradict God (Acts 5:29).
- We also must be “filled with wisdom,” that we might know how to “answer every man” (Col 1:9; 4:6).
- Our spiritual heritage overrides our earthly circumstances (Phil 4:20).
- Those who possess extraordinary gifts and abilities are still required to obey God in ordinary matters.

The world tempts the children of God to view their earthly circumstances according to the flesh. Working through them, Satan undertakes to allure believers into the room of complaint and the dungeon of sorrow. He makes every effort to move them to view the earth and their place in it as the most important thing.

The world reasons differently about difficulties, trials, and adversities. The sons of God must avoid adopting these ways of erroneous thinking. God has revealed “tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” NASB (Rom 5:3-5). Do not doubt this is true! The text before us will confirm this to be the case.

When their trials became more fierce, Daniel and his friends became more steadfast ! Their wisdom became more pronounced, and their faith more dominant. Their hope did not wither in the heat of trial, but blossomed as a rose in the desert of Babylon. They became more resolved, and thus were blessed the more.

ORDERED STEPS

The Word of God declares “The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD” NKJV (Psa 37:23). This is precisely why David prayed, “Uphold my steps in Your paths, that my footsteps may not slip” NKJV (Psa 17:5). And again, “Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me” NKJV (Psa 119:133). It is one thing, however, to know the Bible says this, it is quite another to trust in such direction.

The Lord assists us in believing that He DOES direct the lives of His children, showing them where to go and how to live. The chief means through which this assistance is realized is the Word of God itself. As Paul told Timothy, the Scriptures are able to make us “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim 3:15). Salvation does include the direction of our steps, as well as our extrication from sin and deliverance from the snares of the evil one.

In order to help us trust in Him, the Lord provides several accounts of His direction in Scripture. One such account is that of Daniel, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego). The record of these young men must not be viewed as lifeless history. Rather, it unveils to us HOW the Lord directs the steps of His people.

- He orders their circumstances.
- He empowers their wills.
- He gives them favor with men.
- He assists them to recall His Word.
- He gives them firm resolve.
- He helps them to perceive what will defile, or contaminate, them.
- He opens doors of opportunity.
- He gives them wisdom to speak.
- He delivers them from fear.
- He sustains them in places not noted for His presence or blessing.

All of these things have been evident in our text. They were not there by chance, and neither are the circumstances in your life. The direction of the Lord is not always preceded by stirring announcements and prophecies. More frequently it is undetected to every human sensibility, discerned only by faith.

You have gained great profit from the account just reviewed when you can see the hand of the Lord in it all. If you have faith in God, just as surely as those four lads were being guided by the Lord, so certainly are you.

Some lessons that can be learned from this account include the following. These are, of course, only a sampling of the vast repository of knowledge that is found in this textual container.

- Even though hidden by earthly circumstances, God is able to have you, so to speak, discovered.
- What men intend by their actions are often overturned by Divine decree.
- Those who are over us in the world can be brought to listen to us and be attracted to us.
- God can cause words of wisdom make sense to those who are unacquainted with Him.
- Even though our bodies are hindered by circumstance, yet firm resolves can be made in our hearts.
- If we are resolved to do the will of God, He will make a way for that to be accomplished.
- The Lord can cause a king in Babylon to think of a conquered and captive people as having resources he needs.
- Through God, those who are young in years can be given skilled wisdom, cunning knowledge, and the ability to learn quickly.
- What things earthly rulers appoint are not always to be honored by the people of God.
- Our responsibility to God supercedes our responsibility to government.
- The children of God can learn how to ask people of the world to consider things their faith prohibits.
- Those who live by faith can have fellowship with God when there are no surroundings conducive to it.
- The Lord can work uniquely with a few individuals in a large group.
- God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation.
- The worldly famous can be inclined to relatively unknown believers.
- The heavens are still open to those living in the midst of chastening.
- People of faith can form holy alliances in an alienated world.
- The world's demand to do something wrong, can be changed to an opportunity to reveal the superiority of believing and obeying God.
- While in a place of dominating captivity, a sudden opportunity to stand in a place of honor can occur.

There is no such thing as a test of faith that is not accompanied with grace to face it. He who holds the key of David will not allow a door to be opened that causes challenges to rush in that exceed our ability! He will see to it that we have the advantage, even in the midst of unimaginable hindrance. Our text confirms this is true. Have faith in God! Do not faint in the day of adversity, for that is evidence of small strength (Prov 24:10). Be strong in the Lord!

FAVOR, WISDOM, AND GOD HONORING RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

Lesson #3

As we approach this text, I want to keep before you the profit that is to be realized through it. Scripture has been written deliberately, with a Divine objective in mind. God chose “holy men,” moving them along by the Holy Spirit, to put into writing His own purpose and perspective. I acknowledge that applying the word “perspective” to the view of the Living God comes far short of what I intend. It is not that there are any other valid perspectives. Viewed correctly, God’s view, or perspective, is really the **ONLY** valid one. I use the word to underscore that there is a heavenly way of seeing things – even history. The interrelationships of humanity are under the supervision of the Almighty. I am careful to note this does not mean everything that happens between people is orchestrated by God in all of its details. We must take care not to ascribe the murder of Abel by Cain as directed by the Lord. Such events, however, are all managed by Him, work together for His ultimate glory, and are written for our learning. This perception is essential to a profitable understanding of Scripture.

How frequently we are reminded of the reason for Scripture. Jesus spoke of His imminent death as a fulfillment of Scripture. “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished” (Luke 18:31). When speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, He said, “For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled” (Luke 21:22). Jesus told those who came to arrest Him in the garden, “Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled” (Mark 14:49). When Peter sought to defend Him in the garden of betrayal, Jesus responded, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Matt 26:53-54).

Following His resurrection, when walking with the two on the road to Emmaus, “He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:47). His declarations confirm there are Divine intentions reflected in Scripture. This is involved in their inspiration. They are not merely an accurate record of what happened. Neither, indeed, are they primarily an outline of obligations God has placed upon humanity. Nor are they only an abstract of what is required to be saved. All of these are, indeed, found in Scripture, but they are not its heart.

THE SCRIPTURES HAVE PURPOSE

Men must come away from a merely intellectual view of the Word of God. God has provided the Scriptures for purposes that have more to do with life than with bare information. Through them, the Holy Spirit is doing infinitely more than acquainting us with past events, although that is involved.

- **THESE THINGS HAPPENED FOR A REASON!** “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples . . .” It would be difficult, if not impossible, to substantiate that every single occurrence in the lives of all people are determined by God. However, when it comes to Scripture, the records of those people and events directly relate to Divine purpose. Within that context, what is recorded was not only orchestrated by the Lord, but actually occurred for our benefit and learning. In these events, such as the record before us, an example of Divine direction is made known. The manner in which God manages the affairs of His people is also revealed.
- **WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION.** “. . . and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (1 Cor 10:11). The purpose for the Scriptures includes our admonition, or warning. Care must be taken not to conduct our lives in such a manner as to contradict God’s way of working. In our text, that would involve refusing to yield to the edicts of men when they are in violation of the Word of the Lord.
- **WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING.** “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning . . .” Learning goes beyond mathematical theorems, historical events, and reading skills. Through Scripture, or what is written, we become acquainted with the ways and purposes of the Living God. We learn how He reacts to those who trust in Him, and how He works all

things together for the good of those who love Him, being called into His purpose.

- **THAT WE MIGHT HAVE HOPE.** “. . . that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” (Rom 15:4). Hope comes from God (2 Thess 2:16), but not independently of means. Patience (or endurance) and comfort (encouragement) are obtained through the Scriptures. That is, as we perceive the hand of the Lord in its recorded events, and the unwavering commitments of an unchanging God, we receive the resources needed to complete the race set before us.
- **MAKE US WISE UNTO SALVATION.** “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Scriptures raise our spiritual IQ concerning the salvation of God. Through them, we become more familiar with the nature of salvation, as well as how it is appropriated and maintained within the individual.
- **PROFITABLE.** “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17). When correctly perceived, the Scripture are fuel for the soul. They enable believers to engage in the “good works” for which they were created in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10).

NOT LIFELESS DOGMA

All of this is, indeed, pertinent to the review of our text. In our study of the Scriptures, we must do everything possible to avoid the development or embrace of lifeless dogma. This is particularly relevant when we are considering the providential working of the Lord. If we do not guard our hearts, such knowledge will tend to make us less involved with the Lord, moving us to suppose that God works independently of human involvement.

The above texts have related the Scriptures to admonition, learning, patience, comfort, hope, wisdom, profit, and being ready to do every good work. Those are all aspects of life – spiritual life. If our text does not yield these benefits in some decisive measure, we have missed its purpose. What is outlined in this text “happened” as an example for us. It shows how God works things together for the good of those who love Him, and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). They have been written to admonish our hearts about not yielding to competing influences, but to stand firm in the faith. It is possible, and needful, that we learn from this text that those who believe will not be ashamed. If we are in circumstances that are less than ideal, an enduring spirit, strong consolation, and good hope, will be ministered to us in this text. If our faith will take hold of these words, we will become more adequate to do the works God has planned for us – and He has surely planned works for us (Eph 2:10).

Faith is able to make a connection between this text and the personal good fight of faith. Through it we can be assured of God’s involvement in our own walk of faith and labor of love. We have not been left alone in this world!

FAVOR WITH THE PRINCE

“ Dan 1:9 Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.” Other versions read, “God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs,” NKJV “God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials” NASB “God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs,” ASV “God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel,” NIV “God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master,” NRSV “God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs,” RSV “God had given the chief official great respect for Daniel,” NLT

THE LORD'S DOING

The Holy Spirit is careful to give us an accurate view of the circumstance. He will not allow us to remain ignorant of the particular working of the Lord – of His involvement in the affairs of men. In unveiling these affairs, He never exaggerates, is totally without guile, and avoids vagueness and ambiguity. He will not leave us thinking about fate, luck, or happenstance. He will precisely and effectively explain to us WHY Daniel was well liked and held in high regard by an official of the king's court.

“Now God had brought Daniel into favor . . .” Other versions further unfold the intricacies of this statement. The favor of Daniel in the eyes of the prince was “granted” by God, NASB “caused” by God, NIV and “brought” by God. Webster The Lord, then, who has access to men's hearts, caused the prince to be especially favorable to Daniel. He did so without compromising His own holy character, and without violating the Divine imagery in the prince.

Several preliminary conclusions can be drawn from this text.

- The work had already been done: “ had brought.” NKJV “ had caused the official to show favor.” NRSV
- This was a special dispensation from the Lord: “ granted Daniel favor.” NASB “God gave Daniel favor.” RSV “ had given the chief official great respect.” NLT
- This was something God caused, or made to happen: “ made Daniel to find kindness.” ASV “ had caused the official to show favor.” NRSV

An Answer to Solomon's Prayer

This circumstance was, in a sense, an answer to the prayer of Solomon during the dedication of the Temple. In that marvelous and lengthy prayer, the king prayed, "and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them" (1 Kgs 8:50). Other versions read, "grant them compassion," NKJV "make them objects of compassion," NASB and "cause their conquerors to show them mercy." NIV

Not An Isolated Incident

As magnificent as this incident is, it is not an isolated one. This is the manner of God with His people – to cause them to receive favor from those who would normally be considered their enemies. His power is used for such purposes.

- JOSEPH: "But the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison" (Gen 39:21). "And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house" (Acts 7:10)
- ISRAEL: "And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians" (Ex 3:21). "And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians" (Ex 11:3). "And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians" (Ex 12:36). "He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives" (Psa 106:46).
- EZRA: "Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which . . . extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counselors, and before all the king's mighty princes" (Ezra 7:27).
- NEHEMIAH: "O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man . . . And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me" (Neh 1:11; 2:8).

Solomon put it this way, "When a man's ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" NKJV (Prov 16:7). The Living God is over the mind, affections, and emotions of men. He can "open" hearts (Acts 16:14). He can also "turn" hearts (Prov 21:1). This is not a circumstance for which endless details are provided. There are, however, examples given of this activity in order that our faith may be strengthened.

God's people are not moved about at the whims of mortal men! Although, on the surface, it may appear as though everything was in the hands of men, it was not. God was orchestrating the affairs of Daniel, just as He does with all who are in His favor. That is precisely involved in the statement, "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" NASB (Rom 8:28).

The Lesson to be Learned

There is a lesson to be learned here. Those who put their trust in God can have the assurance that God will defend them. “But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them ” (Psa 5:11). Again, those who seek the Lord in their afflictions and trials will not be disappointed. “for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee” (Psa 9:10). The Lord can lift you out of the circumstances, as He delivered Israel from Egypt, Daniel from the lion’s den, and the three Hebrew children from the fiery furnace. OR, He can cause you to find favor with those who are your enemies, as He did Joseph in prison, or Ezra and Nehemiah in Persia. With God, all things are possible!

TENDER LOVE

The expression “tender love” is not a romantic one. With the general acceptance of sodomy, base and corrupt views of this text have been espoused and zealously promulgated. That circumstances requires that something be said about this expression.

The words “tender love” are translated as follows in other versions. “Goodwill,” NKJV “compassion,” NASB “sympathy,” NIV “mercy,” Douay “pity,” BBE and “great respect.” NLT

The word “tender” emphasizes the sympathy, pity, and respect the “prince” had for Daniel. The word “love” confirms that he was inclined to do good to Daniel, and seek certain advantages for him. “Tender love” is the opposite of the perspective of an enemy, who lays traps and snares for those he hates, and seeks an occasion to bring them into shame and disgrace. The “prince of eunuchs” did not seek to make Daniel stumble and fall, but to protect him, and see to it that his interests and protection were served.

Note, the attitude of Ashpenaz was “caused” by the Almighty God. It was a heavenly grant, or gift, to prepare the way for Daniel’s protection and prominence before king Nebuchadnezzar. Now, when Daniel presents his case to the man placed over him, that man will be inclined to hear what he says, and provide the provisions he requests. As “the Breaker” God had gone before him, preparing the way (Mal 2:13). As with Cyrus, the Lord went before Daniel, making crooked places straight (Isa 45:2), clearing the path on which he was placed. It is no different with you!

I have found that it requires great faith and a persistent spirit to maintain this perspective. Our current spiritual environment, at least in the Western world, is not conducive to the maintenance of such a view. Yet, it is absolutely essential that we do so. Let us encourage such a posture!

A PROBING QUESTION

“ 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.”

I FEAR THE KING!

The “prince” is a good servant to the king, as well as one who seeks the genuine interest of the four Hebrew lads. He does not simply order Daniel to eat what is set before him, but reasons with him. Nor, indeed, does he immediately grant Daniel his request. Daniel had “asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way” NIV (verse 8). Now his faith will be tested. Even though Ashpenaz was especially drawn to Daniel, and desired to do good to him, yet he also was mindful of the king. He knows all too well that the suggestion of Daniel will not set well with Nebuchadnezzar. Thus he immediately answers, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink.” NASB He would not violate the trust of the king at the suggestion of a young captive!

SOMETHING TO SEE

In this we see that God does not turn men into impersonal and unthinking robots. The fact that He “caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel” NIV did not mean that official would have no regard for the king. Neither, indeed, would he simply default to showing Daniel favor at the expense of displeasing the king.

In a moral arena, where decisions are made, and thoughtfulness occurs, it is essential that patience and wisdom be found in those who trust the Lord. They will be required to assess their circumstances, and to respond to them in the wisdom of faith.

Times When God Does It All

There are times when believers are simply brought through a circumstance with little of their own involvement. In such cases, the Lord undertakes for them as they simply wait upon Him.

- The drowning of Pharaoh’s army. “The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Ex 14:14).
- When Jehosaphat faced the Ammonites and Moabites. “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you . . . And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten” (2

Chron 20:17,22).

- Peter's deliverance from prison. "And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me" (Acts 12:7-8).

Times When Involvement Is Required

However, every deliverance is not after this manner. There are times when the ones being delivered are required to engage in considerable preparation and activity.

- Noah building the ark. "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits." (Gen 6:14-15).
- Paul being lowered over wall in a basket by the disciples. "But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket" (Acts 9:24-25).
- Obadiah hiding one hundred prophets in a cave during the oppression of Jezebel. "For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water. (1 Kgs 18:4).

Times of No Apparent Deliverance

There are also times when no deliverance is apparent – when it appears as though the enemy triumphs.

- The killing of Abel. "And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Gen 4:8).
- The murder of Zachariah the prophet. "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar" (Matt 23:35).
- The stoning of Stephen. "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:59-60).

Those who imagine that living by faith is simplistic do well to examine their persuasion. There are no guarantees about the details of Divine deliverance! The Lord may simply crush your enemies

without you lifting your hand or voice, as He did with Pharaoh and his armies. He may extend your presence among your enemies, calling upon you to engage in prolonged and hearty activity, like Noah building the ark. And, you may fall before your enemies in seeming defeat, like Stephen before the Jewish council. Deliverance occurred in all of these cases, but it was identical. Israel realized instant and obvious victory. Noah waited long, and then was delivered in seclusion from his enemies. Stephen was wafted into the heavenly realms, and afforded a glimpse of a standing Savior while he was dying.

Simplistic souls are prone to declare the details of Israel's deliverance as the standard. Those with a propensity toward works will be inclined to declare that the only valid picture of deliverance is that of Noah and his family. Those who do not see the Lord as a great Deliverer might be inclined to think Stephen's experience is the standard. All three views are wrong. They neither represent God nor circumstance correctly. Living by faith is not that simplistic, and we do well not to be so naive as to think it is.

A PROBING QUESTION

The way in which the Lord will accomplish the deliverance of the four children of Judah will portray yet another Divine manner. In this case, some dialogue will be required, as well as judgment and wisdom.

“ . . . For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.” A worthy question, indeed! The “prince of the eunuchs” has been given an order by the king. Under ordinary circumstances, this involved a diet that would promote a healthy appearance before the king. Now, Ashpenaz reasons that the failure of Daniel and his colleagues to submit to this diet would promote an inferior appearance. That, in turn, would reveal he had not obeyed the edict of the king, and would result in his sure death.

Thus he puts forth two reasons why the suggestion of Daniel does not seem wise. First, it would result in haggard looks for the boys. Second, it would cost him his life. Both of these are weighty considerations. How will Daniel respond? Or will he respond at all? Unbelief would conclude it must be the Lord's will to eat the king's diet. However, Daniel trusts in God. Now, we will see how faith works, trusting God and speaking wisely at the same time. It faces potential danger, finding a way to confront it that will honor God, and respect the king as well.

NOT ALL YOUTHS WERE THE SAME

The directive of the king was “that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes” (1:3). While we may conclude that only Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were selected, the text does not demand such a conclusion. In fact, verse six affirms they were “among” the ones chosen for special orientation. The larger group were “of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes” (verse 3), while within that group were the four “of the children of Judah.”

There is no record of any of the other young men speaking up, or objecting to the special diet imposed by the king. Three years later, when all of those in the orientation were brought before the king, “ among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah” (verse 19). An apparently significant number of children were found among the captures Israelites. Yet, only the four children of Judah “stood before the king.” Many were selected. Many successfully passed through the orientation program. However, only four of them were brought into the royal court.

It is a principle in the Kingdom of God, that those who are at last exalted, must prove faithful in the beginning . What a noble example we have in these boys! Thank God for their record!

THE ANSWER OF FAITH

“ 11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.” Keep in mind, this is a young boy replying to the decree of a king. He does not fall backward in fear at the answer of his custodian. Nor, indeed, does he conclude there is no need to say anything more. He has determined in his heart not to defile himself, and human reasoning will not move him to abandon that determination. It is for this reason, that God now grants Daniel wisdom to answer the objections of those over him.

HE ANSWERS THE IMMEDIATE SUBORDINATE

Daniel honors the king, giving due respect to the protocol that has been put in place. He does not send a letter to Nebuchadnezzar. Nor, indeed, does he speak directly to Ashpenaz. Instead, he addresses his words to “Melzar,” whom Asphenaz has placed over the four boys.

It appears from this text that the prince, Ashpenaz, had concluded his discussion with Daniel. His last word was that he would be putting himself at risk to disobey the king, and he felt the four children of Judah would be the worse for choosing another diet. For many, that would have ended the matter. Flesh would reason that the Lord had closed the door to any possible change in the diet. After all, the one in charge had rejected the pleas of Daniel. There was no need for further discussion. A shallow person would conclude it must be all right to eat what the king sets before them. A legalistic heart would simply refuse to eat the food, going on a self-imposed fast. Being full of faith, however, Daniel will choose yet another course.

Faith Is Persistent

However, faith can find paths that are not evident. Godly intentions do not retreat into forgetfulness when they are challenged by earthly dignitaries. Faith can reach upward, laying hold upon the Living God. It can then probe earthly circumstances, being used by God to arrive at creative solutions. This, as we will see, is done in wisdom and prudence.

A TEST IS PROPOSED

Remember, this is a young boy that is speaking. Yet, it is not merely a young boy, but one who has faith in God and a determination not to eat what His Lord has forbidden – even though the king demands it.

One Speaks for All

“Then said Daniel . . .” Although there are four lads, and each one “showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding, and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court,” NASB yet they do not all speak for themselves. They are in perfect accord, and one can speak for them all.

This is one of the marvelous benefits of the “unity of the faith” (Eph 4:13). One can accurately and effectively speak for all. This is what happened on the day of Pentecost, when Peter spoke in the behalf of the other eleven Apostles. “But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them . . .” (Acts 2:14). He did not upstage the others, but spoke for them all, thereby removing the confusion caused by simultaneous voices.

In our text, Daniel does the same, presenting the case of all four children about something concerning which they were in perfect accord.

A Earnest Appeal

“Prove . . . I beseech thee . . .” Other versions read, “Please test” NKJV “Try, I beseech thee” DOUAY “Try, I pray thee.” YLT Although they are members of a Divinely chosen race, the seed of Abraham, they speak humbly, making an appeal to the one placed over them. They are, after all, in a foreign land, and their nation is under the chastening hand of God. This is not the time to be arrogant, or affirm the superiority of the Jews. Yet, their circumstance still does not justify forgetting their covenant with God, and the various dietary laws that God had imposed upon them. Therefore, Daniel makes an earnest appeal to the official.

Although “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” vestiges of the Divine nature remains in them. God can enable His people to make appeals to that part of man in which a spark of tenderness may yet exist. While this is not an area where we can make laws, it is one that can offer

great hope to believers that are living under less-than-ideal circumstances. It is possible to be under a person who seems heartless and inconsiderate. It could be a husband, a father, a manager, or the governor of the land. Such circumstances can open the door for the entrance of despair and hopelessness, pummeling the oppressed person down to the basement of depression. There is an alternative.

Like Daniel, we can appeal to the Divine imagery in people – the part that is capable of kindness and consideration. You may think the person incapable of such a reaction, but do not assume that is the case. The “prince of the eunuchs” has already rejected Daniel’s plea. Now he presses the matter further, making a strong appeal to the willingness of an official to submit to a fair test.

A few examples will serve to buttress this principle in our thinking – namely, that we can make appeals to people to be considerate, rather than attempting to impose our will upon them, or giving the appearance of being obstinate.

- Abraham appeals to Lot when contention arises among their servants. “Let there be no strife , I pray thee , between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren” (Gen 13:8). A solution was found.
- Joseph appealed to Pharaoh to allow him to go and bury his father Jacob, even though it would interrupt his official duties. “If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you , in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again” (Gen 50:4-5). Pharaoh consented to do so.
- Rahab appealed to the good will of the Israelite spies, even though she was a citizen of a cursed city . “Now therefore, I pray you , swear unto me by the LORD, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death” (Josh 2:12-13). She received her request.
- Esther appealed to the good will of king Ahasuerus as she pled for her people, the Jews. “ If I have found favor in thy sight , O king, and if it please the king , let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage” (Esth 7:3-4).
- Paul , when faced with the unjust accusations of bigoted Jews, appealed to Caesar, allowing God to work through the judicial system. “But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar ; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain” (Acts 28:19-20). He was given a hearing, and even provided Roman protection from the evil intentions of the Jews.

As I have said, this is not an area in which hard and fast laws can be made. It is, however, an area in which faith can work and wisdom can be exhibited. Sometimes our desires are not met simply because we did not have the good sense to make a humble appeal to the Divine imagery in those who seem to have been overcome with hardness and bitterness.

I am not suggesting that all such appeals will be honored, for no such guarantee is given to us. Herod killed John the Baptist and James the brother of John. Stephen was stoned by the Jewish council to whom he appealed. Notwithstanding, we can cast out bread upon the waters, doing our best to work with the circumstances before us, as Daniel did in our text.

As Willing Subordinates

“ . . . thy servants . . . ” Notice, Daniel does not present his case as one who is being held hostage against his will. He speaks for all four of the lads, affirming themselves to be “thy servants.” Rebelling against the will of the king is not their manner. They are not insurrectionists like Barabbas (Mark 15:7). They are not anti-Babylonians, standing against all of their customs for no other reason than that they are Jews. They are willing to serve, and would not have raised this issue if very important matters were not at stake.

After David had killed Goliath, Abner brought him before king Saul “with the head of the Philistine in his hand.” When Saul asked him, “Whose son art thou, thou young man?” , David quickly answered, “I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite” (1 Sam 17:57-58). He was not ashamed to acknowledge the obligation of his family to the king. It was not the superior relationship, but it was a valid one.

Daniel now presents his case to the officer. He is responding for four Jewish lads who, under ordinary circumstances, were quite willing to do what the king requested. They were his servants, and he would make his petition for them in that capacity.

A Limited Duration

“ . . . ten days . . . ” The test that Daniel proposes is not a long one. He seems to sense a lengthy duration of time would tax the patience of the officer, and give room for doubt in his mind. He therefore asks for a period of testing that is less than one and a half weeks – “ten days.” Considering the nature of his request, this is an extremely short period of time. It is apparent, however, that Daniel knew God could work within this time frame. It was reasonable for God, and would be nearly, if not altogether, miraculous in the eyes of a Babylonian. By the same token, if the king’s diet was actually superior, this would be sufficient time to prove the inferiority of the suggested substitute diet.

Thus, Daniel asks for a period of time adequate to yield observable results, yet reasonable enough to NOT tax the patience of the officer.

It is my persuasion that this period of time was made known to Daniel by the Lord. I do not know if Daniel himself was aware of this, for the Lord can put a thought in a person's mind without the person being fully aware of its Source. When Jesus was among us, He confessed, "I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things" (John 8:28). This is the manner of the Kingdom. The difference is that Jesus operated in full cognizance of this situation. Others have been moved by God, but were not fully aware that was the case. Examples of this lack of awareness include Samson (Judges 14:2-4) and David (2 Sam 24:1).

An Alternative Diet

“ . . . and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.” Nothing was left to guesswork. Daniel did not suggest that the officer find another diet, but suggested one himself, thus making the choice easier for the man.

“Pulse”

The word “pulse” is a contemporary word, though not often used. It means “the edible seeds of various leguminous crops (as peas, beans, or lentils” MERRIAM-WEBSTER The word is also used in Second Samuel. The occasion was the conflict between David and his son Absalom, who was engaged in a quest to seize the throne. A number of men were with David, and they were “hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.” Three men (Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai) brought beds, basins, and food for the men. Part of the food they provided was “parched pulse,” or “roasted grain.” NIV

“Pulse,” or leguminous crops, are plants whose seed itself is the food, whether from the root (as potatoes or turnips), or from the plant above the ground (as peas, beans, or grain). This distinguishes the food from leafy vegetables (as greens), or the plant stalk (as with broccoli or celery). This is the kind of food God initially gave to Adam: “every herb that yields seed” NKJV (Gen 1:29). It was even the type of food with which God miraculously sustained Israel in the wilderness – “manna,” which “was like coriander seed” (Ex 16:31).

“Water to Drink”

Daniel asks for the ordinary beverage – nothing unusual. God's law did not demand that His people drink only water. In fact, unless a person was a Nazarite (Num 6:3) or a priest (Lev 10:9), there was no prohibition against drinking wine in moderate portions. God even blessed the winepresses of the Israelites, telling them to share that bounty with liberated Hebrew slaves (Deut 15:12-14). But Daniel did not suggest they drink Jewish wine instead of the king's wine. Nor, indeed, does he suggest they drink “milk,” found abundantly in the promised land (Ex 3:8; 33:3). The superiority of faith would not be seen in such a procedure.

But when plain water causes the lads to be more healthy and comely in appearance, God will be more apt to receive the glory. Let it be clear, “pulse” and “water” did not give the lads a superior countenance because they promoted good health, but because God blessed the four boys, honoring their faith and determination to please Him.

A Near Miraculous Diet

Considering the desired outcome of the king’s diet, I would be inclined to consider “pulse” a near miraculous diet. Some have noted that such a diet is “not naturally calculated to render them fatter in flesh than the others.” TSK-ALL NOTES It would rather be more apt to produce a lean and less fat appearance, NOT “fatter in flesh” (verse 15).

IMPORTUNITY

There is a lesson here in importunity, or a faith that continues to press the issue. Ordinarily, this is applied to prayer made to God. On one occasion, Christ’s disciples asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” It was at that time that Jesus gave them what is commonly known as “the Lord’s prayer” (Matt 6:9-13). Luke gives only the first part of that prayer, then adds some words pertinent to our text. “Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Lk 11:1-10).

When he was first rejected, Daniel did not give up. He pressed the matter, taking it up with the next in charge. He had “importunity!” He did not simply repeat the request, but wrapped it in a plausible suggestion. As I have said, I cannot but believe God was moving him in this matter, giving him the wisdom to recommend a reasonable solution.

All of this followed the determination Daniel had already made in his heart. “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (1:8). That decision opened the windows of heaven to Daniel. Strength was imparted to carry out his resolve. Faith was granted to do so confidently. Wisdom was imparted that would allow for his request to be fulfilled in an orderly way that caused no disruption among the king’s officials.

DANIEL'S CONSIDERATION

I do not want to leave this section without noting Daniel’s consideration of Melzar, the steward of Ashpenaz. Remember, Ashpenaz considered Daniel’s request a threat to his own life. If the youths

stood before the king “looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king” NASB (1:10).

Daniel had not forgotten that word. Through the gracious direction of the Lord, he carefully crafted a suggestion that would also preserve the lives of those placed over him. He sought to “do good unto all men” (Gal 6:10), even in this critical matter.

FAITH SUBMITS TO EXAMINATION

“ 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.” Those who lean their souls upon the Lord can stand before the scrutiny of men! God has declared, “And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame” (Rom 9:33). Some versions read, “will not be disappointed,” NASB or “will never be put to shame.” NIV Isaiah, who lived and wrote before Daniel, said, “But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end” (Isa 45:17).

Long before the inauguration of the marvelous New Covenant, holy men sensed that God could keep those who made holy resolves. They would petition God to keep them from being ashamed or confounded. David prayed, “In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed : deliver me in thy righteousness” (Psa 31:1). Isaiah wrote, “For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded : therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed ” (Isa 50:7).

This is an aspect of faith that could well be more prominent among us. The Lord encourages us to seek to avoid disappointment and shame. He is not only able to keep us from falling (Jude 24-25), but to keep us from being ashamed, confounded, or disappointed. His Word promotes such a posture!

FIRST , He promises that those who trust and hope in Him will not be ashamed.

- “The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time” (Psa 37:18-19).
- “But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end” (Isa 45:17).

- “. . . and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me” (Isa 49:23).
- “ Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded ; for thou shalt not be put to shame” (Isa 54:4).
- “For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed ” (Rom 10:11).

SECOND , He has inspired holy men to record their requests that they not be ashamed, confounded, or disappointed.

- “In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion ” (Psa 71:1).
- “O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed , let not mine enemies triumph over me” (Psa 25:2).
- “O keep my soul, and deliver me : let me not be ashamed ; for I put my trust in thee” (Psa 25:20).
- “ Let me not be ashamed , O LORD; for I have called upon thee” (Psa 31:17).
- “Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope” (Psa 119:116).

We dare not read the book of Daniel without these things in mind. This is not the record of a mere hero, or one who excelled among his peers because of unusual natural abilities. Rather, it is the report of how God worked with a young man who was willing to trust Him. Daniel trusted the Lord when torn away from his homeland. He trusted Him while in a foreign land, and amidst heathen gods. He depended upon the Lord when he was asked to do things his faith did not allow. Daniel lived out what the Scriptures affirm to be truth.

EXAMINE US!

Faith is not afraid to submit to the most meticulous scrutiny. The faith that keeps the soul also enhances the visible life with comely traits that cannot be condemned. Faith does not shout out, “Who are you to judge!” Rather, it boldly invites judgment! The person who cries out to God, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa 26:2), and “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thought” (Psa 139:23), has nothing to fear from the examination of mere mortals!

“Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee.” Other versions read, “Then let our appearance be examined before you,” NKJV and “Then let our appearance be observed in your

presence.” NASB Daniel is not suggesting the steward merely look at them, but that he view them with a mind toward the king’s demands. He challenges the man to carefully examine them after ten days to see if anything inferior or unacceptable could be found in them – anything that would disqualify them from standing in the presence of the king.

This reminds me of the challenge Peter hurled at “Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.” When they questioned the Apostle about the healing of the impotent man, Peter replied, “If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole” (Acts 4:9-10) . Faith does not back away from scrutiny, cringe when put to the test, or cower and hide when examined.

The thought has occurred to me that much of contemporary Christianity cannot stand up under the scrutiny of men. It has produced multitudes that are in no way better than those who are in total ignorance of God, and alienated from Him because of it. Such things ought not be! They are conditions that unveil the lack of faith in the very ones professing it.

COMPARE US!

“ . . . and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat.” Other versions read, “Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food,” NIV and “You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations.” NRSV

Daniel urges that a comparison be made between the four children of Judah, and those who were given the royal fare of the king. This is to be a thorough examination, not a cursory one. From the standpoint of the Babylonian official, the test was to see if the lads were the worse for not eating the king’s food. From the standpoint of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, it was to see if their faith was in vain, or if trusting in the Lord would be a source of shame.

There are two possible meanings of “the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat.” It could be those who were already in the king’s service. If that is the case, then the four boys would be compared with Chaldean servants who were at their peak. It could also be the other Jewish boys who did not have the scruples of Daniel. In that case, the comparison would be made with others who, like themselves, were being honed to perfection, but were not yet ready to stand before the king.

The test that Daniel proposes reveals the magnitude of his faith, even though he was young. A person in the grip of fear and doubt would not suggest such a procedure. He knew that honoring God could not result in inferiority – not even in this world. Young Joseph refused to dishonor God by caving

in to the lustful cries of Potipher's wife (Gen 39:9). But this did not make him subaltern or inferior in anyway. Faith never pushes men lower, but rather raises them higher. It does not produce or make people inadequate, but imparts to them an adequacy that brings glory to God.

A Challenging Thought

What value is faith, if it produces no difference? No change? Nothing for the true betterment of the individual? If those who have faith are no different than others, and often even inferior to them, what point is there to it? Much of the religion of our day has produced no moral or spiritual change in its constituents. The same sins that are prominent in the world are often found within the professed church. Its leaders have moral failures like political and business leaders of this world. All of this is a blotch upon the name of the Lord. If the queen of Sheba will rise in the judgment to condemn those who stood aloof from wisdom superior to that of Solomon, why will not Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, rise in judgment against those who wore Christ's name, yet fell into all of manner of immorality?

We have a situation before us where people are settling for creeds that do not change men. They embrace movements that do not transform, and positions that lack moral power. Consequently, a whole new theology has arisen that seeks to justify the fact that professed Christians are no different than those who deny His name and reject His salvation. I hear people fairly shouting out, "We are sinners like everyone else – except that we are forgiven ones." Or, "I am just a sinner saved by grace." "God loves us just the way we are." Or, "The Lord accepts us just the way we are." There are a host of trite little sayings like these that not only lack substance, they are a total misrepresentation of the effectiveness of faith.

After all, the grace of God, which brings salvation, has not only appeared to "all men," but is "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit 2:12-14). Where men have not been effectively taught to say "NO!" NIV to ungodliness and worldly lusts, they simply have not been taught by God's grace. Nor, indeed, has grace brought them salvation. If people cannot live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, then they do not have grace or the salvation it brings. If they are not looking for the glorious appearing of Christ, their profession is empty and meaningless. If they are not zealous of good works, and redeemed from the power of iniquity, they are a gigantic contradiction to the grace of God.

How would it have sounded for the four children of Judah to have said to Ashpenaz or Melzar, "We make mistakes just like you Babylonians, except God has accepted us!" Or, "God doesn't love us anymore than He does those who worship idols." Do you suppose their Babylonian keepers would have given a second thought to their request for a special diet? And keep in mind, in our text, the difference will be seen in the appearance of the four lads – how they looked to those who examined them.

It is quite true that those in Christ are not to “judge according to appearance” (John 7:24). That does not justify crude and worldly appearances, and that is not what our Lord intended to convey by those words. What He meant was that Satan can fabricate wholesome appearances, making people appear to be godly when they are really ungodly. You may rest assured that God, however, never cultures ungodly appearances among those who are godly. I sense in my spirit, however, that such a notion is being entertained by altogether too many people.

DO ACCORDING TO WHAT YOU SEE

“. . . and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.” Other versions read, “and as you see fit, so deal with your servants,” NKJV “and deal with your servants according to what you see,” NASB and “and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” NIV

It is clear that Daniel had confidence in the Lord. He was young. He was away from home. He was in a heathen country. Yet he knew that faith does not have geographical boundaries, nor does hope wither when in a foreign land. He could side with the Lord, seeking to honor Him by NOT defiling himself. He had no trouble leaving the outcome of the whole incident in the hands of the steward placed over them. He knew the appearance would be so significant, even a Babylonian could not miss it.

A WISE COURSE

From the steward’s point of view, this was a wise course. If there was any doubt about how the whole procedure would conclude, Daniel had proposed something from which the steward could recover. It was to be three years before they would stand before the king for their final examination. If, at the first, only ten days were consumed, adequate time remained for full recovery to be made. In my judgment, this consideration would have made the whole thing of little consequence to the steward. It could also be concealed from Ashpenaz.

While this way of thinking might be imagined in the steward, it would have been wholly unacceptable for Daniel. He had to be motivated by faith, not probabilities. Besides that, his intention was not to defile himself, and from that intention he could not turn away. Notwithstanding, he so presented the suggestion as to remove any fear of the steward entering into a condition from which he could not recover. Better to perceive how a matter will be judged by others, framing our actions so as to diffuse unnecessary difficulty.

An Unconventional Tactic

I acknowledge that this may appear to be unbelief on the surface. However, allow me to show how God has employed this type of approach before. He has framed the fulfillment of His will in a way that does not allow potential opponents to suspect what is really taking place.

- Instance #1. There came a time when the Lord rejected Saul as king of Israel. After Samuel had

mourned the rejection of Saul for some time, the Lord spoke to him. “And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided Me a king among his sons.” Fearful for his life Samuel replied, “How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me.” The Lord replied, “Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD . And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee” (1 Sam 16:1-3). The Lord moved in such a way as to diffuse needless trouble. Of course, Samuel did, in fact, offer a sacrifice. However, that was not the chief purpose of his trip.

- Instance #2. On one occasion, the king of Syria sent soldiers to arrest Elisha, who had been divulging the campsites and strategies of the Syrian king to the king of Israel. Early in the morning, Elisha’s servant arose, and seeing the whole city compassed with horses and chariots, cried out to his master, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” Elisha then prayed the Lord would open the young man’s eyes, whereupon he beheld that the whole mountain was “full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” As the soldiers came down to Elisha, he prayed that God would smite them with blindness. He then went to the men, who were seeking him in that very place, and said, “This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek.” He then led them to Samaria, which was the capital, where the Lord opened their eyes (2 Kgs 6:14-20). Did Elisha lie to the soldiers?

A TIME FOR COMPARISONS

I remember another time when a comparison was in order. The challenge took place on Mount Carmel. There, on that mount, stood a lonely figure, aligned against four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and four hundred prophets of the grove. The children of Israel had also been gathered to the mount. Now Elijah stands before them and cries out, “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.” Numbed by unbelief, the people “answered him not a word.” But that is not the end of the matter!

Elijah then proposed a test. Two bullocks were to be brought forward. The prophets of Baal were to choose one for themselves, and Elijah would take the other. Each bullock was to be butchered, cut in pieces, and placed upon wood that was on an altar. No fire could be placed under the offerings. The prophets of Baal were to call upon their God first, after which Elijah would call upon the name of his God. The God who answered by fire, Elijah said, “let Him be God.” All of the people answered and said “It is well spoken” (1 Kgs 18:19-39). I am sure you know the rest of the account.

Let me ask you a question. Do you suppose there was any doubt in Elijah’s mind about the outcome of this challenge? Could he have been so bold if there was the slightest question in his mind about which God would answer by fire? The answer is obvious, and requires no further comment. Elijah spoke by faith, with the full assurance of things hoped for.

We are living in a day that needs to see a comparison between those who trust God and those who do not. People have seen enough similarities between professed Christians and the world. They have heard enough about fallen leaders and straying members. It has had its fill of Christian musicians

with a worldly appearance, and church members with no more interest in the Lord than drinkers at the local pub.

Somewhere, sometime, in some generation, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ needs to challenge the world to make a comparison. They need to stand their leaders before the world and call for a comparison. They need to stand their young people before them and demand a comparison. They need to present people who have been fed a steady and consistent diet of the Word of God, and call for a comparison! If there is no difference between what the church produces and what the world produces, it is because they both have the same spirit. This day calls out for real comparisons God needs to be vindicated by a godly people!

THE TIME OF TESTING ESTABLISHED

“ 14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.” Other versions read, “So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days,” NKJV “So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days,” NASB “So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days,” NIV and “So he agreed to this proposal and tested them for ten days.” NRSV

Extended discussion was not required. So far as the record is concerned, the proposal of Daniel was received without hesitation. In this, at least four worthy principles can be seen. These are matters that cannot be learned like mathematical tables. Rather, they are perceptions into which faith ushers us.

PERCEIVED AS TRUSTWORTHY

The fact that Ashpenaz listened to Daniel, and Melzar received his proposal, confirm that Daniel was perceived as trustworthy. He was obviously a noteworthy young man whose conduct did not detract from his abilities. The gifts and abilities of many people are overshadowed by their lack of moral fiber and looseness in conduct. They simply are people who cannot be trusted. Daniel was not such a person. The doctrine he embraced was “adorned” by the life he lived (Tit 2:10).

GOD HAD GIVEN DANIEL WISDOM

It is also evident that God granted wisdom to Daniel – wisdom to frame his proposal in such a way as to make it acceptable. The word was spoken at the appropriate time, or “in due season” (Prov 15:23). Whether or not his words were given to him at that moment, I do not know. It does, however, appear to be a notable example of the Lord teaching in “the same hour what ye ought to say” (Lk 12:11).

They were words with which a Babylonian official could find no fault. That is an example of the wisdom that comes down from above, which “is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated” (James 3:17).

GOD PREPARED THE WAY

It is God’s manner to prepare the way for His people – to lead out before them, removing unnecessary obstacles. Surely Daniel was familiar with the word of the Lord to Israel. When they came out of Egypt, and before they came to the promised land, the Lord spoke of His direction of the people . “Behold, I send an Angel before thee , to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off” (Ex 23:20-23). Later He told them, “And I will send an angel before thee ; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite” (Ex 33:2).

This is involved in the expression, “and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground” (Ezek 38:20). Again it is written, “Take the stumbling block out of the way of My people” NKJV (Isa 57:14). I suggest to you that the smoothness with which Daniel’s proposal was carried out confirms Divine preparation, as well as implementation.

THE OFFICIAL’S HEART TURNED

King Nebuchadnezzar’s mind on the matter of the boys diet was fixed. Ashpenaz gave no indication that he would violate the word of the king. How is it that the steward acquiesced so quickly to the plan advanced by Daniel. Nothing in Scripture suggests it was his manner to go against the word the king, or to act in contradiction of the clear word of “the prince of the eunuchs.”

His heart had been softened by God, just as surely as God had brought Daniel into favor with “the prince of the eunuchs.” Thus is the truth confirmed, “The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD” (Prov 16:1). And again , “Man's goings are of the LORD” (Prov 20:24). It is still true that God can “put such a thing” in the king’s heart (Ezra 7:27). God can not only “turn” people ’s heart to “hate His people” (Psa 105:25), He can also make them “to be pitied” by the very ones who carried them captive (Psa 106:46). Blessed are the eyes that see this, and the heart that depends upon it. If you will allow it to do so, this record will cause faith and hope to grow in your heart.

TRUST IN GOD IS REWARDED

“ 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.”

A NECESSARY OBSERVATION

Again, I am very careful to note the manner in which the Scriptures have been recorded. This is a Divine manner, not a human one. The Spirit moves the writers from significant event to significant event, not from miniscule detail to miniscule detail. In the matter before us, we leap from before the first day of testing to its conclusion, with absolutely no details of the intervening period. Such details are not relevant to the record. There is a reason for this. If history was driven along by purely human influences, details, culture, and the likes, would be of significant importance. In them we could detect trends, the proclivities of those involved, and other such matters. However, if God is orchestrating the affairs for His own glory, the only details that are pertinent are the ones in which His particular influences are apparent. Thus we will learn primarily of His ways.

For this reason, I want to briefly rehearse what we have seen thus far. I do this for a reason. It is that we may more clearly see that God's Kingdom is driven by purpose – HIS purpose. That objective is not fulfilled by God tweaking the initiatives and responses of men, underwriting the good things men do, and overturning the bad things they do.

- In the third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem (1:1).
- The Lord gave Jehoiakim into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, together with part of the vessels of the house of God (1:2).
- The king brought these vessels into the treasure of the house of his god (1:2a).
- The king speaks to one of his officials, commanding that he bring certain of the children of Israel, of the royal seed and princes (1:3).
- The children must have excellent qualities, and would be schooled to stand as advisors in the king's court (1:4).
- A daily diet was established for these children, which included foods and wine from the king's own provisions (1:5).
- Among these children were certain “children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah” (1:6).
- The prince of the eunuchs gave Babylonian names to these children (1:7).
- Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat and the wine which he drank (1:8).
- Daniel requests permission to not defile himself with the king's food (1:8b).

- God caused the official over Daniel to show favor and sympathy to him (1:9).
- Ashpenaz refuses Daniel’s request, saying there was no good reason for them to be disgraced before the king, which would cost him his head (1:10).
- Daniel presents his case to the next in command, a steward that was placed over the boys (1:11).
- He proposes a ten day test in which the four children of Judah would eat only “pulse” and drink only water (1:12).
- Daniel suggests they be tested at the end of the ten days, leaving the rest of the matter in the hands of the steward (1:13).
- The steward consents to the proposal, and proved, or tested, them for ten days (1:14).

If someone asked you how much time all of that required, what would you say? How would you know how much food they ate, or how often it was served? How about where they ate, and whether or not their decision was known beyond their small circle and the steward? What kind of “pulse” did they eat? Seeds? Parched seeds? Boiled roots? While all of those things might be of interest to a historian, or a biographer, they are meaningless when the purpose of God is being delineated.

When God begins executing His purpose, historical background, cultural customs, and the likes have little value. He can move Joseph to be acutely conscious of Himself while he is in an environment that is oblivious to Him. He can train Moses and Aaron in His ways while they are yet in Egypt. He will move men to work contrary to their own instincts, and be favorably inclined to those who are their natural enemies.

The point of our text is that this is something God is doing. Just as surely as He “sent” Joseph into Egypt to preserve a people (Gen 45:7; Psa 105:17), He Sent Daniel into Babylon to testify of His purpose and preserve the knowledge of God among a heathen people. On the surface, it looked like Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery, and Potipher’s wife lied him into prison. But God sent Him! On the surface, it may appear as though Nebuchadnezzar carried Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah into Babylon, attempting to impose their idolatrous ways upon them. But God sent them!

WHY SAY THIS?

I say these things for two reasons. First , there is no other way to account for the harmonious sequence of events. Second , it is only as the hand of God is seen in these things that they will produce patience and comfort in us (Rom 15:4). At the very best, history presents us with possibilities. Further, because the world’s history revolves around influential people, it is improbable that good things will be

repeated, and probable that bad things will occur again. But when we perceive the working of the Lord, everything becomes possible, for that work does not center in people, but in Divine purpose. God can work with Moses' sister Miriam to preserve him in Egypt. He can use a young boy who is keeping sheep to deliver the people from Goliath and the Philistines. A man who is plowing in a field can receive a double portion of the mighty prophet Elijah. Some men mending their nets can become two thirds of the inner circle of the twelve Apostles. A young man who kept guard over the garments of those who stoned Stephen can become the single Apostle sent to the Gentile world. God can suddenly and decisively change things!

The four boys we are reading about can stand for you. Their unlikely circumstances can stand for yours. That is how you must read this account. That is how you must see it. The eyes of this same God still "run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him" NKJV (2 Chron 16:9). That could very well be you! There may be a great work He is doing right now in your area. If you are determined and ready, He will no more pass by you than He did the four children of Judah.

AT THE END

When the ten days were completed, the boys were examined as agreed. They were not examined at the end of five days, or eight, or even nine. What is more, this would be a critical examination, not a casual one. Any failure of the boys to measure up to expectations could possibly cost Ashpenaz his life, and probably theirs as well. This would not be a lenient examination. Too much was at stake. If any blemish or sign of inferiority was present, it would be noted. If, in any way, these four boys proved inferior to the others, all would be lost.

It would do no good to simply be as good as the other boys, for that would prove nothing. A comparison had to be made that resulted in the boys being distinguished from the rest. Daniel had not suggested any criteria for the judgment. He simply said, "You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations, and deal with your servants according to what you observe" (1:13).

The assessment is recorded for us. From the lower perspective, it precisely reflected what Melzar saw. From the high perspective, it declares what the Lord had done: "their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies." NKJV Other versions read, "they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food," NIV "they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations," NRSV and "their countenances appeared fairer and stouter in flesh, than the children that fed at the king's table." Septuagint

The word "fatter" is better translated "firm," "muscular," or, as the Septuagint reads, "stout." The boys were more robust, manly, and fleshed out. These qualities stood out in them as they were among others who had been given a diet calculated to produce such things.

Who in all of the world has heard of such remarkable results in a ten day diet of vegetables and water? The person who could successfully produce such results would become famous and wealthy overnight. However, this was not the result of natural processes, but of supernatural working! God took ordinary food and produced extraordinary results. Some do contend that this was purely the result of a good diet, and that nothing miraculous was in the matter at all. But it is not God's manner to accrue great glory to Himself through nature alone. It is not merely by the sun shining that God is glorified, but when it stands still for an extra day (Josh 10:12-13), or is turned backward ten degrees (2 Kgs 20:9-11). That is when God gets the glory. It is one thing for people to dig a deep well in the desert and thereby find water. It is quite another when water gushes like a river from a rock that has been smitten by a man (Ex 17:6; Psa 78:16). That brings glory to God!

God receives glory when the extraordinary come from the ordinary. That is when "the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes" (Isa 35:6-7). It is when men are made strong out of weakness (Heb 11:34), and when they can "run and not be weary" in the very place where the youths are fainting (Isa 40:30-31). It is when water is turned into wine (John 2:3-10), and a little meal and oil last through an entire famine (1 Kgs 17:12-16).

Those who intend to serve the Lord must set their minds on the extraordinary, even though they work with the ordinary. Although the brethren in Macedonia did not have much, they gave "beyond their ability," even though they were simultaneously in "a great trial of affliction" (2 Cor 8:3-5). That is like becoming fairer and stouter on pulse and water – when a unlawful diet calculated to produce those effects was available.

AT THE END

"And at the end of ten days . . ." Daniel and his friends had an "at-the-end" mentality. They lived for the time when they would be examined – when a comparison would be made between them and those willing to indulge their appetites. What occurred during the intervening days was important, but not as important as "the end of ten days." That is what would determine their destiny. If they were not ready for that day, nothing else really mattered.

In my judgment, we are living in day when the church has lost the "at-the-end" view. There is altogether too much living for the present, and not enough for the future. All of the orthodox creeds and theologies acknowledge "it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27). However, it would be exceedingly difficult to conclude this is what people believed by the way they lived. You surely would not conclude it from the frequency of their meetings, and certainly not from their length. One could attend a rather large number of church services without ever hearing about the coming of the Lord, the end of the world, or the day of judgment. It simply is not fashionable to talk about such things.

But just as surely as the ten-day test of the four children of Judah came to an end, so life's little span will terminate for us all. Then we will be summoned to the judgment seat of Christ for examination, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10). In that day, we had better not appear as "only human!" It will not go well for us if we have done no better in life than those who were "having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12).

That is when your faithfulness and consistency will really count – at the appointed end!

THE DESIRE OF THE HEART IS GRANTED

"16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse." The evidence was enough to convince Melzar. The idea here is that he continued the process that had lasted for the previous ten days – not that he started withholding these portions after the ten days. Thus the NASB reads, "So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables." The food kept coming in, according to the edict of the king, but it was NOT dispensed to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. There was no danger of being upbraided by the king, for the boys would prove superior at the time they were appointed to be examined by the king. Daniel knew it by faith. Melzar knew it by sight.

We must learn from this that the effects of faith do not contradict faith itself. Faith never produces works that belie or negate that faith. It does not constrain a person to live without regard for the things faith has substantized to the soul. Thus, the appearances produced by faith testify to its reality. I do not know if the steward thought about the God of Daniel when he saw the appearance of Daniel. But I suspect that as time proceeded, that association was soon made. If those who "saw the boldness of Peter and John," noting what they said, and how they said it, taking "knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13), surely that Babylonian steward made some connection between Daniel and his friends and the God they served! From that day forward, they received the diet they had requested for ten days.

It was kind of Melzar to do this. However, lest we ascribe too much glory to him, and not enough to God, let us remember he only did this because he knew it was safe for himself. He would not jeopardize his life for the sake of Daniel, nor would Ashpenaz. Knowing this, the Lord provided sufficient evidence to convince him he himself would be protected. Thus, there was no further need for requests, and no more pressure placed upon the lads to eat the king's delicacies. The greater kindness, therefore, belongs to God, not to Melzar.

I have no doubt that Daniel thought about this before he made his request. This was not a short-

term solution, and the results would have to be sufficient to produce three-year effects.

NOT TEN DAYS, BUT THREE YEARS

The scheduled preparation period was three years! “so nourishing them three years , that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.” There are, then, two “ends” in our text. First, “at the end of ten days,” and second, “at the end” of “three years.” In this case, as with ours, the short-term test is the preparation for the long-term examine.

Daniel had an enduring spirit, and was not among those Jesus described as believing “for a while” (Lk 8:13). Although he did not have the advantage of a godly environment, he made one of his own by setting his mind on pleasing God and being identified with His people. We will find that at the end of three years, all four of these young men proved to be most excellent, and advanced in every way. But it all started with a ten day test! It was a time of concentrated effort, the results of which would determine the rest of their lives. But the ten days were not the real point! It was the end of “three years” that was the real point.

CONCLUSION

Our text has shown ways in which the steps of a good man are “ordered by the Lord” (Psa 37:23). It has revealed the God of heaven “upholds” a person’s steps in His “paths” (Psa 17:5). In this record it is confirmed that the Lord “shall set us in the way of His steps” (Psa 85:13). It provides a most excellent example how our Father “works all things together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). Zechariah’s words ring in our ears as we peruse the manner in which the Lord worked with the four children of Judah. “And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God” (Zech 13:9).

How God’s people need to perceive these things. Every honest soul knows “the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer 10:23). The best among us cannot perfectly plan and implement a single day, or even hour, of our lives. Every purpose we devise, even if it is most noble, must be accompanied by the awareness, “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (James 4:15).

From the human perspective, life itself is uncertain. “It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). We do not know “what a day may bring forth” (Prez 27:1). Viewing our life from the lower perspective, and without the purpose of God in mind, we must give heed to the words of our Lord. “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt 6:34).

All of this would cause us to throw up our hands in despair – except for the good knowledge of God. He has apprised us of the future – the critical future that will impact upon every person. There is no ambiguity about these things. They are all certain, and will involve all people.

- **DEATH.** “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb 9:27). There is an appointed time when we will put off this body. If we do not do so in the normal fashion, at death, we will do so when we are “changed” instantly at the coming of the Lord (1 Cor 15:51).
- **THE RESURRECTION.** Those who have died have not passed into oblivion. The truth of this must come home to our hearts: “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:25). For some, the resurrection will be a glorious triumph. For others, it will induct them into eternal condemnation. Jesus spoke of this time in no uncertain words: “for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).
- **THE COMING OF THE LORD.** “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:16-17). The Lord Jesus is going to return visibly and bodily, just as He went back into heaven (Acts 1:11). “Every eye shall see Him” (Rev 1:7), and there will be no question why He is returning, or how it will impact upon us.
- **THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD.** “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet 3:10). Everything that can be accessed by the human senses is going to pass away. That is a matter of revelation. It makes no difference how near to us or far from us it is, or how large or how small.
- **JUDGMENT.** “Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). No one will be able to avoid this time. The “books,” or heavenly records, will be opened, “and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev 20:12). The judgment will be just and final, and God will be proved to be true in everything He has said, done, or required (Rom 3:4).
- **A TIME OF ACCOUNTING.** Because we are God’s creation, we are accountable to Him. He has appointed a time when “every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:10). This accounting will be thorough. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10). The accounting will be for everything, It is written, “That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt 12:36).

- **THE TIME OF REAPING.** A time has been appointed when everyone will reap what they have sown. “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal 6:8). Both rewards and punishments will be assigned that are appropriate for each individual.

A TOKEN OF MERCY

It is a great token of Divine mercy that He has informed us of these things. They are all related to “the end,” which is surely coming – the end of life in this world, the end of this world, the end of absence from the Lord. With us, it is much like it was with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were told of a time when they would stand before the king. At that time, a determination would be made if they would stay in his court or not. So far as they were concerned, their entire lives focused around being ready for that time.

They were given ten days to confirm their faith, and show why they did not need to indulge in forbidden things. The rest of the three years were spent to ready them for “the end,” when they would stand before the king. Briefly, those three years can be viewed as follows.

A PERIOD OF TESTING

During this time, their faith would be tested, as well as their determination or resolve. It would be a time when their commitment would be tested, and their patience and consistency as well.

A TIME OF PREPARATION

It was also a time of preparation, during which they would become suited to function in the king’s court. What they learned during those three years would be used in a noble occupation.

DAYS OF ORIENTATION

The three years was also a time of orientation, when they would become familiar with the ways of the king, and to speak and work in his presence. They were being cultured to function in high places, and walk among princes.

THE PARALLEL

Can you not see the parallel with our own lives in Christ Jesus We are also in a period of probation, when our spiritual fiber and character is being tested. During this time, we dare not grow accustomed to the diet of this world, which is a kingdom destined for destruction. This is the time when our appearance is being changed, so we will not appear spiritually haggard before the Judge. It is the time to become strong, capable, wise, and adept in discerning good and evil. This is the time for us to learn the language of Canaan, becoming expert in the understanding and speaking of spiritual things.

Now, we are learning to navigate in the heavenly realms, where we have been placed in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6). We are becoming acquainted with our Father, and the manner of His Kingdom.

I am very much concerned with how very little is being said about these things in the contemporary church. Multitudes of people never hear about death, resurrection, the coming of the Lord, the day of judgment, and the time of accounting and rewards. It is for this very reason that they are largely unprepared for these appointed events. You may rest assured, that no one will survive these occurrences who is not prepared for them.

KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, AND LEARNING STAND THE TEST

Lesson #4

INTRODUCTION

The stage has been set for God to be glorified in those with faith. A clash has been found between the requirements of the king, and Daniel's commitment to the Living God. The revealed sequence of events is instructive, and we do well to give heed to them. They reveal a spiritual framework within which God works within His people. This is not intended to be the exclusive means through which the Lord works. It does, however, provide a sort of index as to how He works among and within His people.

- Continued in the Faith. Faith in and commitment to God were maintained under adverse

circumstances.

- Integrity maintained. Comely qualities were not allowed to dim.
- Humility. There was submission to the scrutiny of others.
- Determination. Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself.
- Petition. An initial request was made that he be permitted not to defile himself.
- Tenacity. Having been rejected by the “prince of the eunuchs,” Daniel takes up the matter with the subordinate who was over him.
- Wisdom. Daniel presents a proposal that will allow the superiority of faith to be seen.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, or even a mere routine that is guaranteed to bring results. It does, however, confirm that Divine Sovereignty does not eliminate human involvement. Many a confused soul has imagined God has abandoned them because nothing seems to be working out for them. They imagine that true faith sees resolutions instantly, and sets out to change circumstances with ease. They do not comprehend that faith has reasoning and purposing abilities, often moving the individual to efforts that require much wisdom. Attitudes like this are fostered by the notion that God reacts instantly and conveniently to those who have great faith. However, this is not a fair assessment of the facts.

THE EXPERIENCE OF ABRAHAM

Abraham patiently waited for the fulfillment of God’s promise for over twenty-five years.

- The original calling of Abraham, and the promise that the world would be blessed through him. At that time, Abraham (then Abram) was seventy-five years old (Gen 12:1-4).
- Several years later, Abraham thought Eliezer, the steward of his house, was intended to be the heir (Gen 15:2).
- Shortly after this, he then consented to Sarah’s suggestion that the promised offspring could come through her handmaid, Hagar. When Ishmael was born, Abraham was eighty-six years old. Eleven years had passed since the original promise (Gen 16:1-3,16).
- Some time after the birth of Ishmael, and for the very first time, God revealed the promised offspring would come through Sarah (Gen 17:15-16).

- At that time Abraham fell on his face before the Lord, saying “O that Ishmael might live before thee!” (Gen 17:18).
- A short time later, God again appeared to Abraham, specifying the exact time Sarah would give birth to Isaac. About this time, Abraham was ninety-nine years old. Twenty-four years had passed since the promise (Gen 17:21,24).
- A short time after this, the Lord again confirmed to Abraham that Sarah would have the son as He promised (Gen 18:10).
- One year later, at the precise time promised, Sarah “bare Abraham a son.” At that time, he as one hundred years old, and twenty-five years had passed since the promise (Gen 21:2).

SOME NEVER SAW FULFILLMENTS

Although it may appear as though Abraham waited for a long time, he was actually among the very few who saw the promises of God fulfilled. Many saints lived their whole lives in anticipation of something they never fully realized.

- Even in his own case, Abraham never did possess the land that God promised him, nor did Isaac or Jacob. All three of them journeyed in the land of promise “as in a strange country” (Heb 11:9). Commenting on this circumstance Stephen said, “And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child” (Acts 7:5).
- What about Adam and Eve? The promise was made that “the Seed” of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). Eve thought her first-born son was the seed (Gen 4:1). The promised “Seed,” however, did not come until four thousand years later.
- Moses told the people the Lord was going to raise up a Prophet like himself. To Him, the people would hearken (Deut 18:15). The Prophet did not come until about 1,500 years later.
- Isaiah declared a Son was going to be given to the people, and the government would be upon His shoulders (Isa 9:6-7). The promise was fulfilled over 700 years later.

THE POINT OF THIS

In these few examples, I am attempting to show why Daniel proceeded with patience. It is the nature of God to test faith, and it is the nature of faith to survive those tests. Salvation in any of its aspects is not accomplished in a moral vacuum. A moral vacuum is a setting where the individual is not challenged, and choices are not required. It is a realm where good and evil are not locked in mortal combat.

It should not surprise us that a considerable number of professed believers approach salvation as though it was an automatic procedure, initiated in heaven, and carried out upon earth with relatively

little or no involvement on the part of those being saved. Some have adopted this view officially, putting it in a creedal form, and vigorously teaching it to their constituents. Others do not teach this is the case, but live as though it was. They rely upon some point in time when they made a profession of faith, or, perhaps, feel safe in belonging to, what they conceive to be, the correct church. However, whether formally or informally, those who conduct their lives as though God is going to do everything for them are in serious jeopardy.

God has not given people any reason to believe such things. With unwavering consistency, He has given us a record of those who were blessed by Him. Without exception, they were involved in the process. Sometimes they were given things to do, like the instructions given to Israel when they were delivered from Egypt. Other times, as in our text, they had to “work out” their own salvation “with fear and trembling,” relying upon the Lord to give them wisdom on a step-by-step basis.

As we consider Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, we must carefully avoid viewing them as heroes, or some form of super men. These children were living by faith, and faith moves people to live the way they did.

GOD WORKS IN THE MIDST OF CHALLENGE AND TESTING

It is God’s manner to work with His people in the midst of challenges and testing. He accomplishes His will in an arena where the fabric of faith is tested, and the determination and stamina of His people are not taken for granted. Whether it is Moses in the desert, Israel in the wilderness, or the early church in persecution, this manner can be seen. The greater the work, the greater the testing and opposition that is endured. We have Paul as an exceptional example in this “day of salvation.” Ponder the many obstacles that were thrown before him. They included stripes, imprisonment, repeated subjection to death, beatings, shipwrecks, perils, weariness, painfulness, going without sleep, hunger, thirst, fastings, and nakedness (2 Cor 11:23-27). As if that was not enough, he also endured afflictions, necessities, distresses, tumults, dishonor, evil reports, and sorrow (2 Cor 6:3-10). The greater the work, the greater the suffering! That principle reached its peak in the Lord Jesus Himself.

With this in mind, a refreshing view of trials can be seen. They are actually an appointed means for preparing the saints for “greater works.” Further, they are common to all who are living by faith.

FAITH IS EQUAL TO THE CHALLENGE

In all of these things, faith is equal to the challenge. It moves people to wait, but not to be idle. It constrains them to trust, but also to be perceptive and wise. Faith enables the individual to overcome discouragement, and to sense when it is appropriate to do something. All of these things, and more, are seen in the first testing of the four children of Judah. The text before us will confirm these things.

FOUR GIFTED CHILDREN

“ 17a As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom . . . ” The Holy Spirit has provided us with information concerning the surroundings and the circumstances relating to the four children of Judah. A brief review will suffice to set the stage for the exposition of this text.

- The Babylonian captivity is the setting.
- The part of it in which the four children of Judah were taken captive occurred in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah.
- God gave Jehoiakim into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.
- Part of the vessels of the house of God were taken and placed in Shinar in the house of Nebuchadnezzar’s god.
- Nebuchadnezzar requires Ashpenaz, the prince of the eunuchs, to select certain of the children of Israel, from princely backgrounds, for special training to stand in the king’s court.
- The children had to be without blemish, comely in appearance, skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace.
- These children would be taught the language and literature of the Babylonians.
- New names are given to the four children of Judah.
- A special daily diet was appointed to them of the king’s food and wine.
- Daniel determines not to defile himself with the dainties of the king’s court.
- God brings Daniel into special favor with the prince of the eunuchs.
- Daniel asks permission not to defile himself with the food of the appointed diet.

- The prince of the eunuch's denies Daniel's appeal.
- Daniel takes up the matter with Melzar, a subordinate of Ashpenaz, who has been appointed over the boys.
- A test is proposed during which the four children will be fed only pulse and water.
- At the conclusion of the test, the appearance of the boys is superior to that of the other children to be trained for the king's court.
- A permanent diet of pulse and water is established for the boys, and none of the king's special diet is ever again set before them.

I want to again emphasize that God is integral to all of these circumstances. In them He is working all things together for the good of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. None of them are happenstance or random occurrences.

To this point in Daniel several significant details have been mentioned. Of themselves, there are not significant. Yet, God will weave them together into a tapestry that will be suitable for learning and confidence.

- Eight particular people have been mentioned thusfar: Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiakim, Ashpenaz, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, and Melzar.
- Five groups of people have been mentioned: the eunuchs, the children of Israel, the king's seed, princes, and the Chaldeans.
- Six significant places have been mentioned: Babylon, Jerusalem, the house of God, the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god, the treasure house of Nebuchadnezzar's god, and the king's palace.
- Five particular items have been mentioned: the vessels of the house of God, the king's meat, the wine that he drank, pulse, and water.

Now the Spirit will fasten our attention upon the ones for whose good He is working. Although he is a king, Nebuchadnezzar is not the point of Divine working. Although high ranking stewards, Ashpenaz and Melzar are not the focus of Divine intention. Even though it is one of the wonders of the world, the city of Babylon is worthy of Divine manipulation. There are a number of the children of Israel who are in captivity, but the eyes of the Lord will fasten upon certain ones of them.

A DIVINE MANNER

We are learning something about our God here, and we do well to see it. Life is comprised of a variety of circumstances. Differing personalities are brought to bear upon each one of us, as well as a assortment of places and things. Yet, God, using all of these, is working things together for our ultimate good (Rom 8:28). He is doing it in your case, just as surely as He is in the case of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. You may be in oppression like the four children of Judah, but God is not aloof from you, and you are not on your own!

THESE FOUR CHILDREN

The focus of attention is now shifted from circumstances to people – to four particular people. They are not mighty kings like Nebuchadnezzar. They are not prominent in the king's employees like Ashpenaz and Melzar. He will not speak of people in general, like all of the children that were taken captive, or all of the servants of the king's court. He will center upon particular people, and they will even be children.

This is an aspect of God's dealings with humanity that brings great comfort to the afflicted. It is seen throughout the Word of God – namely, that God calls and works with particular people. I understand that all of His workings are not after this manner. There are times when he deals with a whole world, whether for cursing (as in the flood), or in blessing (as in His promise to Abraham). He can bless or curse nations, like Egypt, Israel, Assyria, and Babylon. He can deal with whole cities, as with Sodom, Jerusalem, and even Samaria. However, our God is not limited to general dealings, and we do well to free ourselves from thinking that tends in that direction.

Special Dealings

The Scriptures are filled with God's dealings with special individuals. In a special way, such dealings began with Abraham. They continued with Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and David. The holy Prophets were such people, as well as John the Baptist and the Apostles. Other significant and especially blessed individuals include Luke, James, Jude, Stephen, Philip, Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, and Titus. In each of these cases special calls and special workings were granted. In each of them, individuals rose above their peers, and were separated from the masses.

In not a few cases, the Lord called people out of especially dry and oppressive circumstances. Abraham was called out of idolatry. Joseph was separated from oppressive brothers. Moses was called from the desert of isolation. David was called from the sheepcotes, and when the kingdom was deteriorating. The Prophets were called when the worship of God was declining, and the people were drifting into idolatry. John the Baptist surfaced in times that were spiritually dark and dry, during which no powerful voice from God was being heard.

Circumstances are no hindrance to God! They are merely the tools He uses to shape His people and fulfill His purpose. That is the resounding message that comes through in this passage, and we

must not fail to see it.

The Spirit will now show us how God worked with four young boys. He does so when they are captives. He blesses them in the land of the enemy. He directs and empowers them while they are under the scrutiny of a heathen king, away from their homeland and separated from their parents. He gives them more than others who were just like them. He causes them to excel in an oppressive environment.

I want to urge you to make an association of these children with yourself and where you are. Let this text speak to you about possibilities – Divine possibilities. As hopeless and oppressive as your circumstances and surroundings may seem, you can rise above them through the blessing of the Lord. In fact, Scripture suggests that God is inclined to powerfully work in such situations. You have good reason to hope!

GOD GAVE THEM

“God gave them . . .” Where there is a trusting heart, circumstance cannot stop the blessing of the Lord. When God gives, nothing can thwart the gift from becoming available and accessible. Whether we are speaking of the gift of God’s Son (John 3:16), special gifts given by Jesus to the church (Eph 4:8), particular endowments to His people (Eph 1:17), or differing gifts according to His grace (Rom 12:6), enemies and circumstance are powerless to stop them . If men can believe, what God gives can always be received, regardless of the circumstances or surroundings.

Think where they were when God gave them these marvelous gifts to “these four children.” It is not possible for a context to be more discouraging and seemingly hopeless. The judgment of God had fallen. The people of God are being chastened. The holy city has been devastated. The holy vessels have been removed to the house of a heathen god. The children have been selected to serve in a heathen court. According to the flesh, their surroundings are not conducive to Divine gifts. They are not in a holy place, under godly teachers, or with considerate parents. Yet, God will bless them, and in a most unusual way! He will do it even though they are young. He will do it even though they are not in the promised land. He will do it even though they are living in a period of Divine chastening.

Knowledge

“God gave them knowledge . . .” One version reads , “God gave them learning.” RSV Nearly all other versions read “knowledge.” Here, the word “knowledge” refers to intelligence, or consciousness. It refers to “thought,” or the ability to think soundly and within the bounds of reason. Their minds were gifted, and capable taking hold of facts and declarations and reasoning upon them. By this, the text means the four boys grasped what they read, saw the sense of it, and were able to incorporate it into their thinking.

There are people who are very adept at thinking. They are able to see the interrelationships of

facts, seeing the logic of them. This is a gift that comes from God, and must be so recognized.

You may recall that “knowledge” is one of the things Solomon asked of the Lord. “Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?” (2 Chron 1:10). In answer to his prayer, the Lord replied “Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like” (2 Chron 1:12). Later, Solomon would declare that God gives “wisdom and knowledge” to those who are “good in His sight” (Eccl 2:26). Ordinarily, people associate Solomon with wisdom alone, but he had “knowledge” also, which is comprised of the building blocks for wisdom.

Some Examples

“Knowledge” has to do with the pillars of logic – facts and realities upon which the mind can reason. There are whole bodies of reality that can be known, or concerning which “knowledge” can be possessed.

- “The knowledge of salvation” (Lk 1:77),
- “The knowledge of the glory of God” (2 Cor 4:6).
- “The knowledge of God” (2 Pe 1:2)
- “The knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim 3:7).
- “The knowledge of the Son of God” (Eph 4:15).
- “The knowledge of His will” (Col 1:9).
- “The knowledge” of God’s “ways” (Job 21:14).
- “The knowledge between good and evil” (Deut 1:39).
- “The knowledge of the holy” things (Prov 30:3).

Again, I want to emphasize the nature of this “knowledge.” This is not the mere recollection of facts, but has to do with perceiving the sense of them, and being able to think properly concerning them. The gift of knowledge, therefore, has more to do with comprehending than recalling, and thinking than reciting.

These four children were given the ability to think and reason that was displayed in Jesus when He was twelve years of age. It is said of the Lord Jesus at that time, that He was sitting among the experts of the Law, “both hearing them, and asking them questions” (Lk 2:46). His knowledge included being able to grasp what the teachers were saying, to answer their questions appropriately, and to ask questions that displayed His comprehension of what was being said. Thus, “all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers” (Lk 2:47).

This is the kind of “knowledge” the Lord gave Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were able to take hold of what they were taught, and handle it with sound thought and application.

For The Believer

It is good for those in Christ to seek such knowledge for their children, not relying upon the world to give it to them. But it is particularly appropriate for them to seek the knowledge of God – a consciousness of Him that pervades their whole thinking process. This is precisely what Paul prayed for the church. “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him ” (Eph 1:17). That, of course, is the highest form of knowledge.

Skill in All Learning

“God gave them . . . skill in all learning . . .” Other versions read, “skill in all literature,” NKJV “intelligence in every branch of literature,” NASB “ understanding of all kinds of literature,” NIV and “skill in every aspect of literature.” NRSV In contemporary education, branches of literature would include language, history, biology, geography, botany, and the likes. It is most remarkable to have skill in a wide variety of these things, but God can grant such aptitude.

Ordinarily, men think in terms of having a speciality. It is not uncommon to find those particularly knowledgeable in one area, to be nearly bereft of all sense in other areas. This is not the kind of learning skills God granted to the four children of Judah. It is not that they understood the Law of Moses, but were utterly ignorant in all other areas. In their thoughts, they could walk about in all fields of valid knowledge, perceiving the sense of it, and using it properly, and to advantage. Such an ability is truly extraordinary! There is nothing in Scripture that leads us to believe God no longer grants such skill in learning.

An Example

A example of skill in all learning is Paul’s use of Moses and the Prophets. Although a wide variety of teaching and declarations are found in this portion of Scripture, Paul was able to extract Christ from it all. He said, “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come ” (Acts 26:22). Academically, multitudes of Jews knew Moses and the Prophets as well as Paul. But they did not have skill in the use of them. They could not see Jesus in their words, and thus they used the very texts Paul used to bind burdens upon men and deny that Jesus was the Christ. They did not have “skill in all learning.” Paul did, because he received it from God.

Skill in All Wisdom

“God gave them . . . “all wisdom.” Wisdom has to do with the administration, or proper employment, of knowledge. It is possible, for example, to use knowledge in the wrong manner. Thus a person can become a shrewd and crafty thief, a manufacturer of drugs, or a compiler of pornography. Such people use their knowledge in unlawful and harmful ways. To have “skill in all wisdom,” is to be able to properly employ a wide variety of knowledge for the glory of God and the benefit of man.

God is still in the business of giving “skill in all wisdom” – the ability to properly employ all manner of valid knowledge. Paul refers to this as “the spirit of wisdom,” and prays that God will give it to believers” (Eph 1:17). He elaborates on this matter in his Epistle to the Colossians, showing the relationship of this wisdom to the knowledge that comes from God. “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9).

The purpose of such wisdom is also stated. “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing , being fruitful in every good work , and increasing in the knowledge of God ; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:10-12). You can see the marvelous effects of “all wisdom,” and they are available to all who are in Christ Jesus!

- It effects the fabric of our life, enabling us to walk worthy of God, so that we are not an embarrassment to Him.
- It enables us to please the Lord in every way and at all times.
- We thus become fruitful in every good work.
- An increase in the knowledge of God is realized, so that we are more familiar with His ways and conscious of His presence.
- We are empowered to be patient, persevere, or endure.
- This wisdom enables us to persevere under difficult circumstances “with joyfulness.”
- It promotes thankfulness.

It should be apparent that becoming skillful in all wisdom yields unusual and plentiful benefits. This is the kind of skill that God gave these four young men. The effects of it will be chronicled in the rest of the book. Their unwavering and faithful conduct reveals HOW they used their remarkable knowledge and wisdom.

In my judgment, there is a great need for these gifts in the church of our time. In Christ, they are available in great measures for both old and young. The status of the modern church reveals an absence of these qualities, but such a condition does not need to continue. If, before Christ and this great salvation, God could grant these things to four young captives in Babylon, how much more is He willing

to grant them to those who are in His Son, reconciled to Him, and possessing His Holy Spirit! Such things are to be sought by faith, and expected by hope.

WHAT IS GIVEN MUST BE TESTED

Now we will see that those who receive gifts from God must be tested. Gifts from God are not intended to produce icons among men. They do not place men upon pedestals to be beheld and honored by mortals. Rather, they are intended to make men colaborers with God – to bring them into the vortex of Divine purpose. In order for them to be properly employed, those possessing them must be put to the test. The dross must be taken from them in order that they may bring due honor to God and benefit to His people.

SOMETHING TO BE NOTED

These four children were exposed to all manner of Babylonian wisdom, language, and literature. This involved idolatry (3:3-7; 5:4), magicians and astrologers (1:20), sorcerers (2:2), and soothsayers (2:27). These areas of spiritual falsehood and corruption pervaded the whole of Babylonian literature and wisdom.

Yet these boys were given supernatural knowledge and wisdom that allowed them to remain uncontaminated by Babylon's learning . Not only were they able to employ true knowledge correctly, but they were also able to avoid areas of false knowledge and wisdom.

This should be of especial comfort to believers in this day and time. Many of our children are being subjected to all manner of corrupt knowledge. The academic environment is not good. Some of this can be controlled by godly men and women. However, there may very well be some exposure that is beyond our control. In such times, we have the example of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, assuring us that Divine protection is still available. Our God is great enough to give knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom to our children! It is right to seek such things for them.

ONE WHO EXCELLED

“ 17b . . . and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” Other versions read , “Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams,” NASB “And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds,” NIV “Daniel also had insight into all visions and dreams,” NRSV and “And God gave Daniel special ability in understanding the meanings of visions and dreams.” NLT

All four of the children received knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, but Daniel received more! He excelled above the other three. It was not because he was personally better than the others, but because God gave him more than He did the others. That is God's manner. He does not treat everyone alike. Here were four young men who all had faith and were honorable. Yet, they did not all receive equal gifts from God.

RELEVANT TO HIS MINISTRY

Daniel excelled in an area that would prove unusually significant in God's dealings with men. He was given the ability to understand and interpret "all visions and dreams." Like the grace of God conferred upon Paul was "not in vain" (1 Cor 15:10), so the ability to understand "all visions and dreams" was not given in vain to Daniel.

- He told Nebuchadnezzar the dream he had forgotten (a small stone crushing a large image, grinding it to powder), then gave him the interpretation of it (2:1-45).
- He interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a tree whose height reached into heaven, and was cut down, leaving the stump and roots (4:4-26).
- He recorded a dream he himself had of four beasts coming out of the sea (7:1-14). A heavenly personage enabled him to understand the dream (7:15-27).
- He interpreted a message written by a man's hand upon the wall of the palace of king Belshazzar (5:5-28).
- He was given to understand a vision of a ram and a he goat, and powers springing from the he goat, which strove with one another (8:1-10:21).

GIFTS MUST BE USED

The gifts God gives must be stirred up (2 Tim 1:6), and not neglected (1 Tim 4:14). Those who receive them are to be good stewards of them, employing them for the glory of God and the benefit of those to whom they are given to minister (1 Pet 4:10).

GOD ALONE GIVES SUCH GIFTS

Such gifts cannot be taught by men. They involve skill that cannot be acquired naturally. The understanding and interpreting of dreams, for example, is not a science, as ordinarily understood. Who could conceive of a college course on understanding all visions and dreams?

What is more, not even every one in favor with God receives such abilities. In our text, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had all manner of knowledge and wisdom, but they did not have the ability to understand all visions and dreams. In this matter Daniel excelled above even them.

Speaking of this very principle, Paul referred to various spiritual gifts in this way . “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Cor 4:7). If there are legitimate difference among us, it is God who has caused it. Particularly as regards the body of Christ, “there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1 Cor 12:4-6).

The gifts and abilities God grants are different, but they are harmonious and complementary. There is a certain spiritual synergy in them that enables one person to sharpen and strengthen the other. This a most wonderful quality of spiritual life, and is imperative for the growth of the body..

ON THE MATTER OF EXCELLING

The fact that one can excel his peers is not only strange to some brethren, it is even abrasive. But this response is not at all necessary. Throughout the Scriptures, there are examples of those who excelled. Daniel is certainly not the only one. He excelled other Jewish children who were captives, and even the three choice lads with whom he was more closely affiliated.

- Abraham excelled both his brothers and his father (Gen 11:24-12:1)
- Joseph excelled his brothers (Gen 45:7).
- Moses excelled Aaron and Miriam, his brother and sister (Num 12:5-8).
- Solomon excelled not only kindred Israelites, but “all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt” (1 Kings 4:30).
- David excelled his brothers (1 Sam 16:13).
- Peter, James, and John excelled above the other Apostles (Matt 17:1; Mark 5:37; Mark 14:33).
- John excelled above Peter and James (John 19:26).
- Paul excelled above the twelve Apostles (1 Cor 15:10).
- Timothy excelled among others who labored with Paul (Phil 2:19-20).

- The churches in Macedonia excelled other churches in the matter of giving (2 Cor 8:1–3; 9:2).

The fact that one can excel others in the Kingdom is not intended to create jealousy, friction, or despair. Rather, it will, when properly seen, spawn humility, thankfulness, and hope. Spiritual gifts yield spiritual results. For those who are living in the midst of spiritual famine, or who are surrounded with the blight of mediocrity, there is no need to despair. God can cause you to excel, like Daniel.

BROUGHT BEFORE NEBUCHADNEZZAR

“ 18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.” Suddenly, our text leaps forward three years. Everything occurring during those three years was really incidental, even though considerable difficulties, sorrows, and trials may have been experienced by the four children. There is no reason to believe things were monotonous during that time, or that there were not times of especial joy. Nor, indeed, is it essential to think nothing unusually difficult was experienced. I find it exceedingly difficult to believe that three years could pass without any unusual sorrows and joys occurring, or during which there were no times of trial or triumph.

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

There is a certain kingdom mind-set revealed here, and we do well to take it in. In the Divine economy, purpose is the point, not experience! Faith moves people to consider milestones above the details of life, and Divine appointments above daily circumstances. I do not for one moment suggest there is anything easy or simplistic about this. Nor, indeed, am I dispensing with the hardships or joys of life as though they were nothing. It is HOW we view these things that is critical .

It is possible to be so elated that we forget what is really happening around and within us. An example of this is found in one of Christ’s post-resurrection appearances to His disciples. The occasion is when Cleopas and his companion hastened to the disciples to tell them Jesus was risen, and they had been with Him (Lk 24:33-34). While they were speaking, “Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” The disciples were frightened, thinking they had seen a spirit. Jesus assured them it was really Him, asking them to behold and handle Him, seeing he had flesh and bones just like them. He then “showed them his hands and his feet.” The occasion was so significant that joy welled up in their hearts. However, this joy was the kind that inhibited faith – not the kind springing from faith. It is written, “they yet believed not for joy” (Lk 24:40). I fear many a soul has experienced just such a thing. I do not doubt that such occasions arose during the three years of our text.

It is also possible to assess our circumstances as being totally against us, thus becoming unaware of Divine direction. Such an occasion is found in the life of Jacob. For years, he had thought Joseph was dead. Now his other sons had gone to Egypt for bread, and returned without Simeon. In addition, he is told that the ruler of Egypt, who was actually Joseph, had requested they bring Benjamin back with them to Egypt. It was more than Jacob could bear. He cried out, “all these things are against me” (Gen 42:36). His assessment, however, was premature.

Thus, there are important things to be seen in the way in which the lives of these boys are made known to us. The details of life that did not obviously connect with Divine purpose are simply omitted. The Spirit runs forward to the conclusion of the appointed three year period during which the boys were being prepared to come before the king. The saints during the years that follow will not be profited by the grinding detail of those three years. They will, however, be greatly encouraged by the outcome of that preparatory period.

There is principle to be seen here. We cannot live simply for the moment. There is a time of reckoning and examination, and we must think in terms of being ready for that time.

THE END OF THE DAYS

The word “days” means period of time. That time was specified in verse five: “They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.” NIV During that time, the diet of pulse and water continued to nourish and develop their bodies. Their knowledge and wisdom continued to advance and be honed to perfection. They were not forsaken, but were upheld by God in Babylon. Their faith was kept in tact. Their morals did not decline. They were, in fact, “kept by the power of God through faith,” just as we are (1 Pet 1:5).

A MINIATURE PICTURE

It is not coincidence that the incident before us is a miniature picture of the destiny of all men. Scripture is always within the context of Divine purpose, and is never written in isolation of “the end of all things” (1 Pet 4:7). While it is possible to fabricate such pictures, the one before us is very obvious. It is genuine, reflecting genuine values, and bringing genuine encouragements. We cannot leave this section, therefore, without drawing attention to it.

Ultimately, all men will be called before “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim 6:15). That will also be a time of examination and testing. Paul refers to it as a time when “the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is” (1 Cor 3:13). Just as with the four children of Judah, the outcome will be whether or not we are able to remain in the king's court, or be “ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:17). Until that time, we have the opportunity to learn the wisdom of our real homeland, and become oriented to its manners. We must be about ingesting the proper diet of the kingdom, which is “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of god” (Matt 4:4). Nothing must be

allowed that defiles heart or mind. Blessed is the individual who knows these things, and applies himself to fulfilling them!

THE KING COMMUNED WITH THEM

“ 19a And the king communed with them . . . ” There is a certain sense of intimidation in these words. This was not a casual conversation, as friend with friend. The lads were now talking to the ruler of the world. This is the king into whose hands Judah had been delivered (Jer 21:7; 22:25). God had given “all nations” into his hand, even declaring “and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him” (Jer 27:7). The great nation of Egypt was smitten by him (Jer 46:19), and given to him by God as wages for his army (Ezek 29:19). According to Divine determination, Tyre had been devastated by him (Ezek 29:18). Among the captives he garnered were Phoenicians, Syrians, Egyptians, and Jews. Earthly historians allege that Nebuchadnezzar conquered much of Africa and Spain, marching on through Spain to Greece and Pontus.

Not only did God give worldly kingdoms to Nebuchadnezzar, and use him to chasten His own people. He also gave him “power, and strength, and glory” (Dan 2:37). Through inspiration, Daniel told this king that he was the most illustrious of all kings, and his kingdom was the most glorious of all earthly kingdoms. “And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold ” (Dan 2:38). After him, global kingdoms began to deteriorate. His kingdom was like gold. The following global kingdoms were likened to silver, then brass, then iron, then a mixture of iron and clay (Dan 2:32-33).

Suffice it to say, this was no ordinary man! And now, “these four children,” stand before him. They are there to be examined, after which a determination concerning their future will be made.

“And the king communed with them.” Other versions read, “the king interviewed them,” NKJV “the king talked with them,” NASB “the king spoke with them,” NRSV and “The king conversed with them.” NJB This was not a lecture, it was a two-way conversation. Questions were asked, and interrogation was made. No doubt he scrutinized them on the principal areas of their study, examining them to see if they had knowledge and knew how to use it. He no doubt tested them in their understanding and use of the language of Babylon, which they were to have learned (1:4). He would test the scope of their knowledge, and whether they were able to reason within the framework of a broad range of subjects.

Nebuchadnezzar had spared no expense in the training of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and he would therefore be most thorough in his examination of them. If the aim is to determine

whether of not they will remain as advisors in his court, he must be favorably impressed with them. Their appearance and demeanor must not be distracting. They must be thoroughly conversant with the language and manner of the Babylonians so they can advise him.

There is, however, a higher purpose that is being served here. This book is about God's glory, and how He causes it to be seen. It was not the agenda of Nebuchadnezzar that was driving this series of events, but the purpose of Almighty God. There would be generations of believers that would be taught about the character and purpose of God through the record of these events. We ourselves are among those generations. Thus, these events are being orchestrated by God for that generation "upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor 10:11). That, and that alone, is precisely why this account ministers to our spirits.

AN OBSERVATION

The adequacy of faith must be seen in these verses. Ponder the effect that testing had upon you when you were in school. Or, if you are a student, consider how you feel on the eve of a final exam. What if your future depended on that test? Every student is aware of the impact of such considerations upon the mind and the emotions.

Now, ponder these four boys – away from home, in a foreign land, and, according to appearance, at the mercy of a heathen monarch. The text will confirm that these boys did not buckle under the pressure. Their answers were precise and thorough, and they gave no cause to imagine they were unqualified, or unable to stand in the king's court.

What is it that made these boys so able? How is it that they were not unduly intimidated by one of the greatest and most influential kings in history? It was their faith that prepared and kept them. To be more precise, God kept and enabled them through their faith. This is how the Lord works, whether in the young or the old, the novice or the elder.

If a person can find it in his heart to trust the Lord, relying upon Him, and remaining devoted to Him, he will be kept in the time of testing. That is the message you must obtain from this account!

THE GIFTED ARE PERCEIVED

“ 19b . . . and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

therefore stood they before the king.” The time has come when the effects of faith will be put to the test. The four children of Judah have chosen to prepare for this time in a way that was unconventional for the Babylonians. They chose to be different. They elected to honor the Lord above the king. In honor to their Lord, they opted to refuse the established diet, and be fed with the food of peasants. Will their choice be justified? Will the Lord be honored or reproached by their decision?

AMONG THEM ALL

“Among them all . . .” Other versions read “out of them all,” NASB Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are not the only boys being examined. We do not know how many young men were interrogated by the king, but it must have been a significant number: “them all .”

An Application

It is true that each of us will be judged as individuals. “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12). It is also true that we are not to compare ourselves with our peers. As it is written, “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise” (2 Cor 10:12). However, we must not take a simplistic view of how we will appear before God when compared with others.

There is a public stance that will also be taken by each one of us. What we have been given will make a difference how we will be judged. The advantages that were available to us will also come into play. The four children of Judah were evaluated in view of what they had been taught, how well they assimilated and applied the knowledge, and how they compared with others who had similar advantages – “among them all.”

I cannot leave this section without drawing attention to the time when we will all “stand before God,” and the “books” will be opened (Rev 20:12). We will be judged as individuals, but not in isolation of the rest of humanity. There is a sense in which we will be compared with others. Jesus unveiled this coming comparison.

- Generations that have been given access to great benefits will be compared with the queen of Sheba. “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Matt 12:42).
- Those in whose presence the Lord has worked will be compared with Tyre and Sidon. “Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you” (Luke 10:13-14).

- Those who have heard a message that should have induced faith and repentance will be compared with Nineveh. “The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here” (Luke 11:32).

In Christ Jesus, we have been granted a “better covenant, which is established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6). That circumstance will necessitate some comparison between the church and Israel. Is there anyone who thinks God will overlook those who have done no better under grace than Israel did under the Law? Will those who had a better covenant and better promises be expected to have attained no more than those deprived of such things?

Cities like Jerusalem, Samaria, and Thessalonica will surely be compared with other cities who heard the same message as they, yet did not respond as honorably as they did. And what of individuals like the Ethiopian eunuch, Cornelius, Lydia, and the Philippian jailor? Will they not be compared with other individuals who heard the same glorious Gospel as they, yet responded with less nobility and commitment?

I do not doubt that congregations with gifted people will be compared with the church at Antioch, who had many teachers and prophets among them, and excelled through their ministry (Acts 13:1).

These are not meaningless observations. The whole of Scripture has been written with the manner of God’s kingdom in mind. The examination of these four lads by Nebuchadnezzar should speak to us of our own imminent examination. This is the way God works. It has to do with His ways. That is why the passage has been recorded for us.

NONE LIKE THEM

“ . . . was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.” The superiority of these four became apparent within the context of “them all.” That is when their faith became most evident.

Some people appear quite impressive on their own, but when they are compared with others, they are no longer impressive. There are several such comparisons made in Scripture. They show us that no person stands by himself.

- King Saul is described as a man “whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people ” (1 Sam 10:24).
- King Solomon was distinguished among all kings. Of him God said, “Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee” (1 Kgs 3:12).

- Even on the side of evil, there are some who have excelled above other workers of iniquity, like Ahab. “But there was none like unto Ahab , which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up” (1 Kgs 21:25).
- On the other hand, Hezekiah surpassed others in the matter of trusting the Lord. “He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him” (2 Kgs 18:5).
- When conversing with Satan, the Lord Himself said of Job, “ Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil” (Job 1:8; 2:3).

Distinction In Commonality

Keep in mind, it was their faith, as made known in their determination, that distinguished these young men from all of the others. In this case, “them all” were other Jewish boys who were also taken captive and trained to be ready for this very examination.

- All of them were of the children of Israel.
- All of them were from the tribe of Judah.
- All of them were from royal and princely seed.
- All of them were under Ashpenaz.
- All of them had excellent and superior qualities.
- All of them received the same training.

The Context of the Gifts

However, there is more to life than gifts and advantages. The distinction of these boys was fivefold. These things were the foundation for their excellence.

- **DETERMINATION.** “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (1:8a).

- PETITION. Daniel “ requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (1:8b).
- FAVOR. “God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs” (1:9).
- PRESENTATION. Daniel had presented an alternative. “ Prove thy servants, I beseech thee , ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink” (1:12).
- DIVINE ENDOWMENT. “God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams” (1:17).

Some Observations

You will observe that determination, or purpose of heart, preceded God working all things together for the good of the boys. That determination was also expressed in an orderly request to be relieved of the obligation of imbibing the king’s diet. In honor of Daniel’s faith, God caused Ashpenaz to seek the betterment of the boys. Although rejected at first, Daniel pursued his convictions and intention by purposing a test in which their desires would be justified. God then equipped them for the challenge before them.

Ordinarily, victories and spiritual successes are preceded by such determinations and Divine endowments. It is not right to expect the Lord to simply turn everything around for us when there are godly purposes we can possess and seek to implement. Capabilities are not regularly given without the commitment of those to whom they are granted.

There is a remarkable level of loose thinking on these matters in the average congregation, and among individual believers. Much of the spiritual sterility of the modern church is owing to the lack of godly purpose and commitment. There simply is not a dominating quest to do the will of the Lord, remaining “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27) . However, even though these qualities are not common, they can still be possessed, just as surely as they were by Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in Babylon.

THEREFORE

“ . . . therefore stood they before the king.” Other versions read , “therefore they served before the king,” NKJV “so they entered the king's personal service,” NASB and “therefore they were stationed in the king's court.” NRSV By saying “they stood,” the text means they regularly were before the king, there to assist him as advisors. They became his employees, and were now part of the royal court. Thus, the reason for their preparation was realized.

Blessing Does Not Make Inferior

There is something of particular importance here. In this case, and from one perspective, Divine aptitude was granted in order to the fulfillment of secular, or temporal, activities. Of course, more is involved than this. There would also be prophecies, interpretations, and other matters more obviously

relating to the purpose of God. Notwithstanding, their employment in Divine purpose did not make them inferior in earthly duties! From Nebuchadnezzar's point of view, they were not standing before him because they were blessed by God. He considered them from a political point of view.

Wisdom for Temporal Matters

God's people must be encouraged to consider this aspect of living for the Lord. He can give extraordinary abilities in matters relating to temporal things. We see this in the matter of constructing the tabernacle and those things related to it.

- **ARTISANS.** The Lord endowed certain artisans with the ability to “make Aaron's garments” (Ex 28:3).
- **BAZALEEL.** Bazaleel was given “the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,” enabling him to “to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.” (Ex 31:4).
- **AHOLIAB.** Aholiab receive wisdom to make “the tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, and the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot, and the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office, and the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do” (Ex 31:7-11).
- **BEZALEEL AND AHOLIAB.** “Them hath he filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work” (Ex 35:35).
- **SOLOMON.** The outcome of the wisdom God gave to Solomon was seen in expertise in temporal matters. “And he spake three thousand proverbs : and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spake of trees , from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts , and of fowl , and of creeping things , and of fishes ” (1 Kings 4:32-33).

There is a general assumption in the world that religion causes people to be inferior in both thought and aptitude. Lenin once affirmed that religion was “the opiate of the people,” casting them into social and political sleep. This general impression remains among unbelievers.

However, this is a wholly false impression. We see in Daniel and his colleagues that this is not the case. They stood tall before one of the most politically astute kings in the history of the world – one

who was noted more for his social exploits than his military triumphs.

Let us thrust from us the notion that we must be mediocre in any area of life. We are to do all things, including “word or deed,” and eating and drinking, or “whatsoever” we do, unto the Lord (Col 3:17; 1 Cor 10:31). Our daily occupations are not excluded from this, any more than those of the four Hebrew children.

They Stood Before the King

Our text does not say they were the only ones who stood before Nebuchadnezzar. The stage, however, is being set for a declaration of the purpose and power of God. From this point on, it makes little difference who else stood before the king. God was going to work with them for His own glory, and had so orchestrated the events that what they said and did would be duly observed.

At this point, these four young men, probably around twenty years of age, become the most prominent people in Babylon. Every one else, whether Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, or Darius, are incidental. Further, God is using young men whose abilities and integrity are unquestioned. Years later, presidents and princes who would try and find a reason to condemn Daniel, “could find none occasion nor fault ; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him ” (Dan 6:4). Considering the breadth and length of Daniel’s exposure to human analysis, this is a remarkable observation.

An Application

Whether you are young or old, the Lord can give you the wisdom and ability to stand the tests to which you are subjected! Whether you are standing in a king’s court, or keeping sheep on the back side of the desert, you can excel in what you do, if you seek to honor the Lord in it. Nature cannot lock into mediocrity those who put their trust in God, and determine not to defile themselves! There can be great satisfaction in your daily occupation, just as surely as there was in that of Daniel and his associates.

LESSONS

There are many lessons that can be learned from this text. Remember, we are seeing the effects of faith and godly determination upon human aptitude and conduct. If life seems to have dealt you something less than ideal circumstances, let this text “sink down into your ears” (Lk 9:44). The seeds of encouragement are in it.

Decisions are not an end of themselves. Making godly decisions is a prelude, not a conclusion. It must be followed by shaping our lives to please the Lord. When we are confronted with challenges, temptations, and tests, we must seek the way of escape that comes with them (1 Cor 10:13). In our text, the determination of Daniel was challenged by an edict from the king. It was complicated by the rejection of his initial request. It was also tested by a period of ten days, after which positive results

must be apparent. Daniel did not balk at these things, but held to his purpose, refusing to be moved from it. He and his colleagues therefore received strength to carry out their intentions.

Wisdom is justified of her children. Jesus once said, “But wisdom is justified of all her children” (Lk 7:35). Instead of “justified,” other versions read “vindicated,” NASB “proved right,” NIV “judged to be right,” BBE and “shown to be right.” NLT This saying is attended with some difficulty, yet contains a vigorous seed for our thoughts. The idea is that truly wise people (“all her children”) will eventually perceive the value of right and holy things. In the case of Luke’s text, both Jesus and John the Baptist had been criticized by the religious leaders of that time. John was ascetic, and Jesus mingled with the people. Neither one of them consented to the opinions of the people, or shaped their lives by their demands. Thus, both were criticized. Christ’s point was that those with discerning hearts would joyfully acknowledge both John and Jesus were sent by God, and had the message of God.

In the case of the four children of Judah, truly discerning people can see in them the benefit of living by faith, and refusing to concede to the demands of the world. Their acceptance in the king’s court was directly owing to their faith in God, not their fleshly expertise – which they DID possess by the gift of God.

Faith stands up under worldly tests. Because of sectarianism, and the incessant efforts to maintain it, the value of faith has been greatly obscured. Some have come to view faith as a response in a procedure of several steps, each having equal value. Others see it as a sort of magical possession that has no direct connection with the purposes and intents of the heart. Still others look at faith as an exercise of the intellect. All of these views are adopted because they blend more handily with the theological positions that are being held.

God, however, has no interest in the maintenance of humanly devised systems of thought. Thus, the Scriptures, which are inspired by God (2 Tim 2:16), present faith in a way that blends only with Divine intent. Faith is presented as, opening the door of impossibility. “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mk 9:23). Again, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matt 17:20).

How marvelously this is confirmed in Daniel and his friends. Although captives in Babylon and young children, in three years they rose to a place of prominence in the king’s court. They did so without compromising their faith. They did so while maintaining their resolve not to defile themselves. And, they did so even though they were required to pass the personal scrutiny of the greatest political ruler in the world. Faith does stand up under worldly tests, as well as those higher tests that come from the Lord.

God honors those who honor Him. It is never vain to honor the Lord, shaping your life to please Him and honor His Word. Of old time, people identified with God have reasoned that it was not

profitable to serve Him, even though they had no just reason for doing so.

In Malachi's day, defiled hearts reasoned, "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts?" (Mal 3:14). God considered such words to be "stout," or arrogant, against Him (Mal 3:13). Those who said them could not possibly have been more wrong. In the first place, they had not been serving the Lord, but their own corrupt interests. Then, assigning validity to their defiled religious worship, they said it was all pointless.

Asaph writes how he once envied the foolish and the wicked. He saw them wallowing in prosperity and plenty, while his feet came close to stumbling, and he nearly lost his spiritual foothold. He cried out, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." He could not possibly have been more wrong, and he finally saw that when he "went into the sanctuary of God." Then he saw that the wicked were not secure at all, but were on a slippery slope, leading to destruction (Psa 73:1-19).

Our text confirms that no person who honors God will be ignored by Him. Eventually, they will reap what they have sown in faith – even if they are captives in Babylon. Of the ultimate commitment Jesus said, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honor" (John 12:26).

If you can see this whole event correctly, it was not Nebuchadnezzar that was favoring the diligence of the boys, but God who was honoring their faith and commitment to Him. He will surely have the same regard for your faith and determination to please Him.

TEN TIMES BETTER

"20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." The Holy Spirit now extends Himself to give honor to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. In this, He is revealing the aggressiveness with which the Lord vindicates His people. The Lord not only provides for His own, directing and leading them, He also praises them. That is His manner. Jesus spoke of those who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). He also spoke of those who cannot believe because they "seek not the honor that cometh from God only" (John 5:44). Paul declared a day was coming when all who were aligned with the Lord would receive "praise from God" (1 Cor 4:5).

This is no small matter, nor is it a departure from our text! Zephaniah the prophet told the faithful. “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing” (Zeph 3:17). In our text, we find the Lord doing precisely what the Word declares He will do: praising the faithful and joying over them. This is His assessment of the boys, and not merely the observation of Nebuchadnezzar. There is no exaggeration in these words.

ALL MATTERS OF WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

“ . . . in all matters of wisdom and understanding.” Every major translation reads precisely the same : “wisdom and understanding.” Some use the word “prudence” for “understanding.” NAB

This is an important observation. The boys were not tested to see if they remembered what they read – a practice that is common in academic circles. It is not that such things are not important. However, they do not qualify a person for responsibility. When people are tested in all matters of wisdom and understanding, they are being examined to see if they can USE the knowledge, employing it for useful purposes. It would be like giving a student of mathematics a complex problem to actually solve. Or, like assigning an engineering student some building or technical project that would prove he knew how to use the knowledge to which he was exposed.

There is a vast difference between knowing what tools are, being able to pick them up, and knowing how to profitably and constructively use them. It is possible to teach a young boy how to pick out a hammer, saw, and screwdriver. But it would be quite another matter to ask such a boy to build your house, or a shopping mall.

The idea here is that the boys were tested in all kinds of areas where special understanding was required. The examination was no doubt extensive (“all matters”), requiring several days to complete.

An Application

In my judgment, the modern church is sorely lacking in men who have their “senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:14). This is the primary reason for the sudden rise in religious counselors, while a simultaneous drop in ministers of the Word has taken place. Those who specialize in, what is called, “Christian education,” should grant no credentials to their students until they can, to some helpful degree, work with the truth of God. If Nebuchadnezzar would not allow advisors in his worldly court who could not pass an examination in all areas requiring wisdom and understanding, why should the church of the living God do so? That criteria should also be bound upon elders, deacons, and teachers.

TEN TIMES BETTER

“ . . . he found them ten times better . . . ” All major translations of Scripture use the words , “ten times better.” One reads, “ten times superior.” WEBSTER This is not, then, a mere hyperbole, or literary exaggeration.

The remarkable extent of the superiority of these four boys can be seen when we view other Scriptural comparisons.

- When Israel gathered manna the day before the Sabbath, they were allowed to gather “ twice as much as they gather daily” (Ex 16:5).
- Under the Law, if a man had two wives, one beloved and the other hated, he was commanded to acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, giving him a “ a double portion of all that he hath” (Deut 21:17).
- When the mighty prophet Elijah asked his understudy, Elisha, what he desired, he said, “let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.” Elijah acknowledged he had asked a “hard thing.” Nevertheless, he did receive what he requested (2 Kgs 2:9-10).
- When Nathan gave David a parable about a man who stole his neighbors solitary lamb to serve a guest, David was incensed, and said the man should restore the lamb “fourfold” (2 Sam 12:6).
- When Jesus came to the house of Zaccheus, the tax collector said, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold ” (Lk 19:8).
- When Joseph fed his brothers, and without them realizing it was him, “Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of” of his other brothers (Gen 43:34).
- Solomon said a thief that was caught was required to “restore sevenfold ” (Prov 6:31).

The point here is that a most extraordinary thing occurred in these four boys. In our world, those who excel are often just barely better than those whom they exceed. A single answer will often separate scholars, or a fraction of a second be the difference between the better athlete and those who follow him. In a day when photo-finishes are required, and judges must deliberate and see replays to determine who is the best, the account before us is worthy of notice. No extensive deliberation was necessary. Nor, indeed, were selective tests required, or an adjustment in the criterion of judgment. In all matters of wisdom and understanding, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were “ten times better.” Thus their faith was honored, the God of the Jews vindicated, and shown to be superior. All of this was accomplished in a deliberate and extended period of interrogation.

IN ALL HIS REALM

“ . . . than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.” Here is most arresting consideration . The comparison is not made with the other children of Israel, but with established specialists of the land. In matters requiring expertise and discernment, these four young men were “ ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.” These were the established veterans of the king’s court, and not prospective members of that court. Further, the fact that those with whom Daniel and his friends were compared were from “all of his realm,” confirms the nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s interrogation. He did not simply ask questions of them and personally evaluate their answers. There was apparently consultation with his established advisors. In that consultation, the superiority of the boys answers became apparent. The experience of the boys was much like that of Jesus in the Temple when He was twelve years of age.

Because a considerable amount of comparison will be made with these wise men of Babylon, it will be profitable to briefly comment on them here.

- **MAGICIANS.** These were the “wise men” of Babylonia. Historians say it applied to those who healed the sick by singing. It also applied to those practicing magical arts and incantations, and those who accomplished things surpassing human powers. There are several Scriptural references to such men. In Joseph’s day, before he interpreted the Pharaoh’s dream concerning the lean and fat cattle, the Pharaoh put the matter before his “magicians” (Gen 41:8,24).

When Moses was sent by God to order Pharaoh to let His people go, he confronted Egyptian magicians. When Aaron threw his rod down and it became a serpent, these “magicians also did the same things by their secret arts” NIV (Ex 7:11). They also “did the same” NIV as Moses in turning water to blood, and bringing frogs out of the water (Ex 7:22; 8:7). They could not , however do the same as Moses in bringing forth lice from the dust, or any of his miracles after that (Ex 8:18).

These magicians are further mentioned in Daniel 2:2,10,27; 4:7,9; and 5:11. They will compete with Daniel throughout this book.

- **ASTROLOGERS.** Other versions refer to these as “conjurers,” NASB “enchanters,” NIV “users of secret arts,” BBE “sorcerers,” Septuagint and “soothsayers.” NJB The original word has a variety of meanings, including necromancer, conjurer, astrologer, enchanter, and exorcist. STRONGS A “conjurer” is one who practices magical arts, or a wizard. These men are particularly mentioned throughout Daniel (2:2,27; 4:7; 5:7,11,15).

The Law prohibited any involvement with this kind of people – namely those who obtained knowledge or power from other than God. No consultation could be made with one using “divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer” (Deut 18:11). Another breed of these unlawful resources was a “witch,” which the Law did not allow to live (Ex 22:18). Isaiah mentioned “wizards that peep, and that mutter” (Isa 8:19), forbidding any consultation with them. He also mentioned “astrologers, the stargazers, and the monthly prognosticators,” challenging Israel to see if they could save them (Isa 47:13).

The Ephesians, who believed, came, confessed the deeds, and “them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men” (Acts 19:19). Preceding their penitence, a woman possessed with a “spirit of divination” precisely defined Paul and company, telling who they were and what they had come to do (Acts 16:17). Add to this certain of Satan’s ministers, who transform themselves into “ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor 11:15). Additionally, there are “principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). Later in Daniel, we will hear of a lofty evil power who withstood a mighty angel for twenty-one days (Dan 10:13).

Thus, the field of competitive spiritual influences is seen to be vast and powerful enough to impact anyone who does not possess faith. They include:

- Magicians
- Astrologers
- Diviners
- Observer of times
- Enchanters
- Witches
- Consulters with familiar spirits
- Wizards
- Necromancers
- Stargazers
- Monthly prognosticators
- Those using curious arts
- Ministers of Satan who transform themselves into ministers of righteousness.
- Principalities
- Powers
- The rulers of the darkness of this world.
- Spiritual wickedness in high places.

All of these influences have been around for a long time. Vast segments of the world have been controlled by some of them, such as Persia and Greece, which are specifically mentioned as being under the control of inimical spiritual influences (Dan 10:20). They are not to be viewed as fictitious, or having neither reality nor power. Were such the case, we would have God condemning something that does not even exist, which is unthinkable (Deut 19:10-11; Ex 22:18; Lev 19:26,31; 20:26,27; 1 Sam 28:3,7,9; 1Ch 10:13; 2 Chron 33:6; Isa 8:19,20; 47:13; Ac 19:19; Ga 5:20).

Thus, we have this vast array of unlawful sources of power and knowledge, many of which were found in both Egypt and Babylon. Israel spent four hundred and thirty years in Egypt, and seventy in Babylon. Both were especially dominated by Satan and his hosts. Yet, the faithful survived them all!

In Daniel's day, these powers were at their peak, and those influenced by them were vaulted into places of political and social prominence. Now, the wisdom and understanding of four young boys is compared with the seasoned veterans of the dark world. And what will the comparison yield? Will Nebuchadnezzar be able to see the difference? And, what will he do if he does see it?

“In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.” NIV It made no difference where the magicians and enchanters were, or if they were in communicative clusters, or meditating upon a mountain. They simply could not compete with those to whom God had given “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.”

Let no believer imagine for a moment that God cannot make them equal to the challenges of where they are! There is no need to compromise, or to adapt to the passing fashions of this world. The four children of Judah are testimonies to us of the effectiveness of faith.

They loudly declare to us that those who resolutely purpose to keep from being defiled, will be strengthened by God to do so. He can turn the hearts of those over His people toward them, to give them honor and consideration. He can enable them to pass any test that is leveled at them by the world, and to stand up under any comparison with their peers.

DANIEL CONTINUES

“ 21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.” The NIV reads, “And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.” That is, he remained in the king's court without interruption until that time. Some commentators are confused by this statement, for later Daniel received a special vision in “the third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (10:1). The text simply means that Daniel's presence in the court was continuous and uninterrupted until the first year of Cyrus' reign. After that he remained prominent, but was not always in the king's court. During the reign of Belshazzar, for example, the king was not aware of Daniel until his wife told him (Dan 5:11-12), thereby confirming he was not time in the court at that.

Cyrus reigned from 550 BC until 530 BC. Nebuchadnezzar overthrew Jehoaikim and took the four children of Judah captive around 602 BC. Allowing for the three year preparation of the boys, that means Daniel remained uninterrupted in the king's court from approximately 599 BC to 551 BC, a period of about 48 years. That alone is remarkable. Still, Daniel was also prominent in the reign of Darius the Mede. It is not certain precisely when his reign began, or when it concluded. It appears, however to be one of significant length, giving you a rough idea of the length of Daniel's prominence –

most likely over seventy years. His ministry stands as one of the longest of any prophet or man of God.

IT ALL STARTED

And, it all started with four young boys being captured and taken to Babylon! Their first great test was whether or not they would eat and drink things that would defile them. They kept the faith, and did not waver from their purpose. The rest is history.

CONCLUSION

Like Jeremiah before him (Jer 1:6-7), Daniel was called to the work of a prophet when young. So far as we know, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were not prophets. They were endowed with wisdom from God, and were later set “over the affairs of the province of Babylon,” while Daniel sat in the gate of the king, or in the royal court (Dan 2:49). The last we read about these three, renamed “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,” they were “promoted” by king Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3:30). One fourth of the way through the book of Daniel, they disappear from its pages. We never again hear of them in Daniel, or any other book of the Bible. Daniel then becomes the premier figure in the book.

Among other things, this confirms the superiority of prophecy to other gifts. As it is written, “greater is he that prophesieth” (1 Cor 14:5). That principle is lived out in this book.

During their young years, one of the secrets of the stability these four had was their fellowship with one another. They stood together, whether against the diet or the edicts of the king. No doubt they were of great assistance to one another during their three years of preparation. Although they all excelled in wisdom and understanding, only one of them excelled in prophesying and interpretations.

You must not forget the great lessons of the passage we have reviewed. Those who purpose to please God will be strengthened by Him. None will be ashamed who put their trust in God, whether before the mighty Nebuchadnezzar, the magicians and astrologers of Babylon, or others who have had opportunities similar to their own.

There is no reason why you cannot take your stand for truth just as Daniel and his friends. God will honor your faith and commitment as surely as He honored theirs. That is the Divine manner.

The Prophecy of Daniel

THE WISDOM THAT DOES NOT STAND THE TEST

Lesson #5

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of Daniel has been a revelation of the working of the Lord, and how He prepares those with a perfect heart for service in His kingdom. The Spirit reminds us that “the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him” (2 Chron 16:9). God is always working, fulfilling His good pleasure, and carrying out the counsel of His will. When Isaiah saw the Lord “high and lifted up,” above Him “stood seraphim.” They were appropriately adapted for the heavenly realms. Each one of them “had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew” (Isa 1:1-2). The magnificent glory of God is seen in the covering of their faces with two wings. Like the prophet Elijah who covered his face with his mantle when He heard the Lord (1 Kgs 19:12,13), so these seraphs veiled

themselves before the majestic glory of the mighty God. The Seraph's covered their feet with two of their wings, showing their humility and submission to the Lord. With two their wings they flew, soaring about the throne with discerning eyes and probing spirits. What they beheld is most significant, for they cried out , "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory " (Isa 6:3). The glory of God filled the earth because He is working in it, fulfilling His counsel (Isa 46:10-11), governing the nations (Psa 22:28), and doing whatsoever He wills (Dan 4:35). GOD IS WORKING!

Jesus said of God , "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" NKJV (John 5:17). Christ confessed that the works He did were "the works of Him that sent Me" (John 9:4). The works of God were brought to their apex in the Lord Jesus. Nevertheless, He has always been working. His working is so meticulous that Jesus said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will " NKJV (Matt 10:29). As if that was not minute enough, He added, "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered," or "has been counted" NJB (Matt 10:30), indicating that not even a hair of your head can fall out without the Father's approval.

THE DETAILS TO THIS POINT

In Daniel, we are beholding the inscrutable workings of God. We are seeing examples of His "judgments" and "ways," which are otherwise "past finding out" (Rom 11:33). Some details are being provided that show how "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" NASB (Rom 8:28). We must not fail to see this, for in this understanding encouragement and hope are ministered to the human spirit.

- Nebuchadnezzar's besiegement of Jerusalem was orchestrated by God (Dan 1:1; 1 Chron 6:15).
- The Lord gave Jehoiakin the king into Nebuchadnezzar's hand (1:2a).
- The Lord gave the vessels of His house into Nebuchadnezzar's hand (1:2b).
- The Lord turned the king's heart to the consideration of the captive children of Judah (1:3-6; Prov21:1).
- The Lord brought Daniel into favor with the "prince of the eunuchs," who was over him (1:9).
- God gave the four children of Judah "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" (1:17).
- God gave Daniel "understanding in all visions and dreams" (1:17; 9:22).
- The wisdom given to the Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah is caused to be made apparent to the king and his court (1:20).

All of these things have been directed by the Lord, of whom are "all things" (Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 8:6). In none of these details is God merely responding to the intentions or blunders of men. Without violating His own character or turning men into mere robots, the Lord is working out His own immutable purpose. Because Daniel has been made a part of that purpose, the Lord is causing him to come into the limelight. Within a public context, and one which involves writing and records, the Lord is going to unveil His mind and will. He will also confirm the utter impotence of human wisdom, or unlawful knowledge obtained from the world of darkness. There is surely much to be learned from this account.

In this account, and if we will believe, terms that are applied to God will obtain especial significance.

- “The Most High God” (Gen 14:18).
- “Possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen 14:19).
- “The God of heaven, and the God of earth” (Gen 24:3).
- “The Lord in the midst of the earth” (Ex 8:22).
- “The God of the spirits of all men” (Num 27:16).
- “God of gods and Lord of lords” (Deut 10:17).
- “God . . . of all the kingdoms of the earth” (2 Kgs 19:15).
- “Exalted as Head above all” (1 Chron 29:11).
- “Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all” (1 Chron 29:12).
- The One “who rulest . . . over all the kingdoms of the heathen” (2 Chron 20:6).
- “LORD alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and Thou preservest them all” (Neh 9:6).
- “In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind” (Job 12:10).
- “With Him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are His” (Job 12:16).
- “He is the Governor among the nations” (Psa 22:28).
- “The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa 24:1).
- “He is a great King over all the earth” (Psa 47:2).
- “God reigneth over the heathen” (Psa 47:8).
- “God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psa 75:7).
- “He is terrible to the kings of the earth” (Psa 76:12).
- “God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Psa 115:3).
- “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places” (Psa 135:6).
- “He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings: He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan 2:21).
- “The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will” (Dan 4:17).
- His is “the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever” (Matt 6:10).
- He has “made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).
- “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph 4:6).

These are not mere theological statements, or tenets of a well thought creed. Rather, these are revelations with which the events of Scripture are to be correlated. They are what enables us to take hold of statements like God working all things together for our good. Our text is revealing to us HOW the Sovereignty of God is expressed among the sons of men. It confirms why nothing is able to separate us from His love, which is in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:35-39), and why none are able to pluck us from His hand (John 10:28-29).

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

Why take the time to say all of these things? It may appear to have little relevance to our study of the book of Daniel. The nature of the times in which we live require considerable elaboration on the nature of God and the nature of man. The last few decades have brought in a theological fog that has

obscured the essential matters of life.

Ignorance of God. Not only is there a prevailing ignorance of God, there also appears to be little concern about it. Other things have upstaged the living God, so that He is brought into the fabric of thought only in the time of crisis. In our time, it is difficult to see God in the Word of God, or Divine purpose and grace in Scripture. The theology of our times has hidden these things.

Men unduly exalted. We fully expect men to be dominant in entertainment and business. By their very nature, these areas of life promote career-building and selfishness. However, when men are unduly exalted in the realm of religion, a most serious condition exists. In its essence, “pure religion” postulates human weakness and deficiency. Thus, the need for God becomes more apparent, and the quest for His approval more prominent. However, when men are exalted, the awareness of a need for, and the understanding of, God necessarily dissipate.

Human wisdom too prominent. Although life itself should accent the inadequacy of human wisdom, our times have greatly obscured this reality. These days, particularly in the Western world, speculation and philosophy, which provide no real answers, are seated upon the throne of human thought. Like the Athenians and Stoics, men are delighting to “hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). New books, new modes of entertainment, new technology – yet in it all, the deep and unquestionable need of humanity lies buried in the rubble of human ignorance.

A tendency to focus on smaller matters. Those who have been in Christ for a considerable time, are aware of the smallness of contemporary thought in general, and religious thought in particular. Men are occupied with issues that have little or no eternal relevance. In the average Christian, an abrupt change of priorities will take place one second after death. Often, such a change takes place prior to death during a crisis, or period of great stress and pain. This is the result of the dominance of small and inconsequential thought. The things that are of the greatest concern to the average person of our day are really not very important at all.

These conditions, and more, are why I am taking this approach to the book of Daniel. This, in fact, is providing a setting of silver in which to place golden apples of truth (Prov 25:11). It is what makes the text pertinent to your own life. In the events that are recorded, we are seeing how God works. We are beholding the nature and effectiveness of faith. God is confirming how he causes men to stand, and does, in fact, keep them from falling. He is fully able to do this, and we are to rely upon Him to do so.

THE TIME ARRIVES

“ 2:1 And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.” Having acquainted us with the preparatory work of the Lord, the Spirit now begins to unfold how God will announce the introduction of His kingdom, and the consequent demise of all earthly kingdoms. The revelation will be made in such a manner as will strengthen and encourage saints of all ages. It will also confirm the impotence of human wisdom, as well as the ultimate futility of all earthly government.

We will also see how the Lord will vault Daniel into prominence, so that his word is heard more widely. Having already conferred unusual wisdom upon Daniel, and given him the ability to interpret all visions and dreams, the use of those gifts will now be shown.

In this we learn Divine gifts are always to be employed. They obtain no value or profit if they are not stirred up and used for the glory of God (2 Tim 1:6). Nothing the Lord does or gives is for mere show, or the vanity of self-praise. Every good and perfect gift not only “cometh down from the Father of lights” (James 1:17), but is used for His glory, and the implementation of His eternal purpose.

THE SECOND YEAR

“And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar . . .” For some, this text has introduced some difficulties. This is owing to the time frame that is mentioned. Some explanation is in order.

Jeremiah mentions that the word of the Lord came to him in the fourth year of Jehoiakim’s reign, which was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign: “The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon” (Jer 25:1). Daniel informs us that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim’s reign over Judah : “In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it” (Dan 1:1). It was at that time that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were taken captive (Dan 1:6).

Our text follows a three year period of training in which the four children of Judah were being prepared to stand in the king’s court. If we follow Jeremiah’s statement, Nebuchadnezzar would now be in the fourth year of his reign instead of the “second.” If we take “the second year” from the standpoint of the capture of the four young men, the second chapter records an event that took place before the end of the three year training of the captive boys. Because some have considered this to be such a monumental problem, certain professed scholars have doubted the authenticity of the book of Daniel. For that reason, I want to devote a few cursory remarks to this academic dilemma.

There are several possible solutions to this difficulty. I do want to emphasis that these are all academic, or pedantic, in nature. Under no circumstances are they to be allowed to cast a shadow of doubt upon the Scriptures.

- According to history, the first period of Nebuchadnezzar's reign was one with his father Nabopolassar. Viewed from this perspective, "the second year" of Nebuchadnezzar's reign refers to the second year he reigned alone, following the death of his father. Jahn's History of the Hebrew Commonwealth, p. 134
- Some choose to believe there is an error in the text, and that Daniel misstated the case – like a typographical error. EWALD Whatever problems are seemingly solved by this view, are neutralized by the reproach it casts upon the Word of God.
- Josephus dated the reign of Nebuchadnezzar from his conquest of Egypt, at which point he began to reign over the world. ANTIQUITIES 10:10.3
- One commentator dates the years according to the time of the destruction of the Temple. RASHI
- Another suggested solution is that "the second year" is from the time the boys stood before Nebuchadnezzar to be examined. SUGGESTED IN PULPIT COMMENTARY
- Yet another suggestion is that this text refers to the time that Daniel and his colleagues stood before the king for examination. WIESLER
- Still another view is founded upon the historical observation that the first year of the reign of a Babylonian king began with the year following the commencement of that reign. That would make "the second year" the "third year" of the boy's training. The difficulty with this, and the previous two views, is that they do not harmonize with the extreme anger of Nebuchadnezzar at this time (vs 5,8-9,12).
- I will introduce another view, toward which I am inclined. I am not aware of this view being introduced by any one else, although I have no doubts others have considered it. First, it should be apparent from the last verse of the first chapter that everything is not being recorded in strict chronological order. A summation of Daniel's influence is thus said to extend without interruption "unto the first year of king Cyrus." The second chapter may very well begin with a summary reaching the other way – toward the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. We learn from our text that many "dreams" are involved, and not a single one. It is therefore possible that these dreams extended over a lengthy period, during which repeated efforts were made by the king to obtain knowledge of them. Thus, the text may very well be describing a rather lengthy process during which the impotence of worldly wisdom was amply demonstrated.

The Effects of Questioning

My purpose for this brief diversion is not to suggest a flawless solution, although I am satisfied such a solution can be found. Rather, it is to confirm the limited value of such an approach to the Word of the Living God. Most solemnly, we are warned to avoid approaches that "minister questions" (1 Tim 1:4). We are even exhorted to "withdraw" from those who have an unhealthy interest in controversial

matters, knowing they bring corruption to both heart and mind (1 Tim 6:14). “Unlearned questions” are also to be avoided (2 Tim 2:23).

It is important to note the effect of such academic approaches to Scripture upon your spirit. The mere presentation of the various views I have related has an impact upon the believer – and it is not a favorable one. It tends to neutralize the Word itself, opening the door for doubt, or even despising the Word of the Lord.

The Best Approach

The best approach to Scripture is that of believing. The view should be taken that is less complicated, and allows for “every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” to stand (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4). Thus, there is a sense in which Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams began in the second year of his reign. There is no need to correlate this with every reference to his reign, and that is not the intent of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, and without being contentious, I choose the latter suggestion to be the most plausible: namely, that the king’s dreams began well before he was aware of the wisdom of Daniel.

TROUBLING DREAMS

“ . . . Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams . . . ” Other versions read, “Nebuchadnezzar had dreams,” NKJV “Nebuchadnezzar dreamed such dreams,” NRSV and “Nebuchadnezzar had a series of dreams.” NJB

Some versions refer to a single dream . “Nebuchadnezzar had a dream,” DOUAY “Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream,” Septuagint “King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream,” NAB and “Nebuchadnezzar had a dream.” NLT

There is no contradiction in these expressions. The idea is that he had the same dream multiple times. We know that a single dream is involved because of Nebuchadnezzar’s later reference to “ the dream which I have seen” (2:26), and Daniel’s interpretation of “ thy dream ” (2:28). Evidently, this extended over a considerable period of time.

God Speaks to Heathen in Dreams

There are numerous instances in Scripture of God speaking to heathen people in dreams. While men may choose to speculate in this area, it is enough to note this is the case, and humbly receive that manner of Divine involvement in the affairs of men. We must not allow our theology to become so rigid and lifeless that it makes no provision for the judgments of God being “unsearchable,” and His ways “past finding out” (Rom 11:33).

- God came to Abimelech , king of Gerar, in a dream by night (Gen 20:3).
- God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night (Gen 31:24).
- God gives a Midianite a dream that revealed they would be overcome by Gideon (Judges 7:13).
- Pharaoh’s butler dreamed of a vine with three branches that budded and brought forth rich grapes which he pressed into Pharaoh’s cup (Gen 40:5,8-11).
- Pharaoh’s baker dreamed of three baskets of white bread which he carried upon his head, and from which the birds ate (Gen 40:5,16-17).
- Pharaoh dreamed of seven fat cows that were eaten up by seven lean ones (Gen 41:1-4).
- Pharaoh dreamed of seven plump ears of grain that appeared on a stalk, only to be swallowed by seven thin ears of grain (Gen 41: 5-7).
- The wise men from the East, who came to see Jesus (Matt 2:12).
- Pilate’s wife has a dream about Jesus (Matt 27:19).

God Speaks to Believers in Dreams

One of the marks of the New Covenant, declared by Peter on Pentecost, was “your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

While no man can systematize these events, or plot a pattern of Divine involvements with men through dreams, this is one of the manners in which God has worked among men – heathen men. There are, of course, multiple instances of God giving dreams to His covenanted people (Jacob (Gen 28:12; 31:10-13; 46:2), Joseph (Gen 37:5-10), Solomon (1 Kings 3:5), Joseph, husband of Mary (Matt 1:20; 2:12,19,22)).

Notwithstanding, there are precious few such dreams recorded in Scripture . In my judgment, the fewness of recorded dreams is designed to neutralize the human propensity to involvements with God that do not involve understanding. There is not enough information concerning “dreams” in Scripture to formulate a theology concerning them. There is also not enough said about them to promote trust in them, or move men to expect God to direct them through dreams.

Lessons to Be Learned

- The fact that God has spoken to the heathen through dreams confirms they are not the highest form of Divine communication. This is not intended to deny their reality, or move men to despise them. It is to say that they do not bring any form of spiritual superiority to the individual. God distinguished Moses from others by NOT speaking to him in dreams and visions (Num 12:6-8). Through Jeremiah, God likened dreams to “chaff,” when compared with His Word (Jer 23:28). These facts should keep us from an inordinate desire for dreams.
- God does have access to the minds of men while they are in a subconscious state. He can gain a person’s attention during the night hours, when one is not ruled by rationality.
- Here is another aspect of the Lord’s control over our enemies, and how He works everything together for our good. When we are tempted to despair because of those who oppose us, we can recall how God worked with men like Abimelech, Laban, Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar – in dreams.

The Troubled Human Spirit

“ . . . wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.” Other versions read, “and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him.” NKJV “his mind was troubled and he could not sleep,” NIV “a dream that disturbed him so much that he couldn't sleep,” NLT and “a dream which left his spirit no rest and robbed him of his sleep.” NAB

The dream Nebuchadnezzar repeatedly experienced was very troubling to his spirit. Even though the NIV reads “his mind was troubled,” this is not a proper view. The agitation went deeper than the mind, for the king could not even remember the dream, much less ponder various nuances of its meaning (2:5).

The word “troubled” literally means to strike, to beat, or to pound. It speaks of severe inner agitation, upheaval, and turmoil. It was not a particular rational thought that so troubled the king, but the implications of the dream, which he could not remember, much less explain. It appears that he sensed this was the dealing of God, and that it pertained to his kingdom, being of great importance.

The language of the King James Version is very precise and Accurate: “his sleep brake from him.” Other versions say his sleep “left him.” NKJV/NASB It is as though his spirit was so agitated sleep ran from the king, for sleep cannot cohabit with turmoil and upheaval of spirit. The dream pounded sleep out of him, so to speak.

In all of this, we must not forget that God is getting Nebuchadnezzar’s attention. He uses a most unconventional, but highly effective, means to do so – a dream that could neither be remembered nor interpreted. The king experienced much the same thing as Pilate’s wife, who seemed to have a bit more understanding of her dream. She said to her husband, “for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him (Jesus) ” (Matt 27:19).

It is possible for the human spirit to be agitated and distressed over things that are not processed by rationality or logic. Thus it is written, “But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32:6). It is marvelous to consider how the Lord works within the framework of such complexity, fulfilling His will, and bringing benefit to His people.

SOMETHING ELSE TO CONSIDER

Something else to consider is the time at which these troublesome dreams came upon Nebuchadnezzar. It was when he was at the zenith of his power. According to Divine mandate, “all nations” served him, including even the “beasts of the field” (Jer 27:6). God gave the mighty nation of Egypt to him as wages (Ezek 29:19-20). He had sacked Jerusalem, “the city of God,” and carried the choicest of Judah away captive. His nation was mighty, and its glory unexcelled among the kingdoms of the world.

This mighty king lost no sleep over nations that would not submit to him. When Jehoiakim, king of Judah, rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king came upon Judah and “slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age” (2 Chron 36:13-17). He subdued nations conspiring against him, including Edom, Moab, Tyre, Sidon, and Ammon. He also smote the Arabs of Kedar, and the kingdoms of Hazor (Jer 49:28-29). This king seemed invincible.

Yet, he was reduced to a troubled and sleepless man by dreams! Men ought to learn from Nebuchadnezzar of the frailty of a human spirit that is not on fellowship with the Living God. Daniel could sit calmly among lions (Dan 6:22-23), and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego could walk about in a fiery furnace heated “seven times more than it was usually heated” (Dan 3:19-25). Peter could sleep between two soldiers, with no reason to believe he would not be beheaded the next day (Acts 12:6), and Paul could learn how to suffer need as well as how to abound, all the while possessing peace and confidence (Phil 4:12). But Nebuchadnezzar could not contend with dreams that came to him from God.

We learn from this that earthly prosperity cannot bring peace to the troubled heart. A position of high rank cannot do this either. As the Scripture affirms, “There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked” (Isa 48:22; 57:21). Yet, there come times when a soul will give all that it has for some peace of mind. What a blessed affirmation of Divine power is given to the sons of men. “When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?” (Job 34:29). In Nebuchadnezzar’s case, the Lord did not give him quietness, and thus his life was turned on end because of dreams. The knowledge of these things would revolutionize the lives of many, bring great hope to those who trust in God.

THE EXPERTS ARE CALLED

“ 2 Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. 3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.” We do not know how long these dreams continued, or the duration of Nebuchadnezzar’s troubled spirit and sleepless nights. As is the manner of the Holy Spirit, He provides only such details as lend themselves to the consideration of God and His purposes. After the king’s spirit had been agitated for some time, and sleep fled from him, he determined to consult with his advisors. His first recourse was not to the Lord. Nor, indeed, was it to the “four children of Judah.” We should not be surprised, therefore, when his own efforts to understand the dream are thoroughly frustrated.

All of these circumstances are not intended to be the fullest and most precise view of the situation. They are but a framework in which the Lord Himself is working, fulfilling His immutable counsel.

We have before us a circumstance in which God will unveil the impotence of worldly wisdom in the arena of comprehending Divine intent. We will learn later that the dream in question came from God Himself: “the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter” (2:45b). The interpretation of the dream will not be a Divine adaption of truth to a dream generated apart from Himself. By inspiration, Daniel is not applying heavenly parallels to a fleshly imagination or circumstance. The dream came from God. It was a critical revelation of something God was going to do in the world. It was not given to a Jew – not even to a prophet. Instead, God revealed it to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. The difficulty is that the king cannot even remember the dream, much less dig out its meaning.

All of this being true, we have a situation much like that of Moses and the plagues of Egypt. Those plagues were nothing less than judgments “against all the gods of Egypt” (Ex 12:12). They revealed the Lord truly is “God of gods” (Deut 10:17). The fact will be emphasized in Babylon, as it was when the children of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh cried out , “The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, He knoweth” (Josh 22:22).

This Divine judgment will not only be against the gods of Babylon, but specifically against the accumulated wisdom of Babylon.

THE BEST THE WORLD HAS

“Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams.” The king calls for the recognized Babylonian experts in the appropriation of wisdom and knowledge. These men were among Nebuchadnezzar’s counselors, and were often employed to assist him in critical decisions.

Magicians

Most versions read “magicians.” Some alternate translations read “wonder-workers,” BBE “scribes,” YLT and “enchanters.” Septuagint In this text, the word “magicians” is not to be understood in the ordinary sense. The accent of the word is on wisdom. These were “men eminent in learning and science.” McClintock & Strong Their expertise was not traced to academics or the study of books, but to supernatural acquisition. Thus, the king called for them because he sensed his dream was itself supernatural. At this point, the validity of the “magicians” knowledge is not the point.

In Scripture, this classification of wise men is repeatedly associated with Egypt (6 times) and Babylon (7 times).

In Egypt

In Joseph’s day, the Pharaoh called for the Egyptian “magicians” (same word) to interpret his dream of the seven fat and seven lean ears of corn (Gen 41:24). When Moses was sent to Pharaoh, he confronted Egyptian magicians. With “their enchantments,” they turned their rods into serpents (Ex 7:11). They also turned water into blood (Ex 7:22), and brought up frogs on the land of Egypt (Ex 8:7). They were not able to bring up lice, or duplicate any other of the ten plagues (Ex 8:18). They recognized that what Moses and Aaron were doing was “the finger of God” (Ex 8:19). During the plague of boils, the Egyptian “magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians” (Ex 9:11).

Nothing in Scripture suggests what these men did was not real, or that it was accomplished by slight of hand, or some other trick.

In Babylon

The first reference to the Babylonian “magicians” is found in the first chapter of Daniel (1:20). There, “in all matters of wisdom and understanding,” the four children of Judah proved “ten times better” than these “magicians.” They are also mentioned in association with the dream introduced in this chapter (2:2,10,27). They also were summoned to assist Nebuchadnezzar to interpret his dream of a great tree that was cut down (4:7-9). King Belshazzar was told that Nebuchadnezzar had made Daniel “master of the magicians” (5:11).

Once again, nothing in Scripture suggests the Babylonian “magicians” were merely experts in illusion and conjuring tricks.

Astrologers

Other versions read “conjurers,” NASB “enchanters,” NIV “the wise men,” DOUAY “the users of secret arts,” BBE and “soothsayers.” NJB These men were users of horoscopes, and professed to divine future events by the appearance of the stars. This was a common form of knowledge in the Eastern world. We were also first introduced to these “astrologers” when Nebuchadnezzar examined Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (1:20). At that time, their wisdom and understanding proved vastly inferior to that of the Hebrew children.

Through Isaiah, the Lord challenged those who relied on heavenly bodies to appropriate knowledge. “Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers , the stargazers , the monthly prognosticators , stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee” (Isa 47:13).

These men are only mentioned in Daniel, and are related to the Babylonian pool of wisdom. They are called in to assist in interpreting this dream (2:2,10,27). They were also consulted when Nebuchadnezzar had the dream of a tree that was cut down (4:7). Belshazzar also summoned them to interpret the handwriting on the wall (5:7,11,15).

Once again, nothing in Scripture declares astrologers were mere pretenders. Although some element of pretension may have been found among them, the activity itself appears to have issued from the realm of “the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12).

Sorcerers

Most all versions read “sorcerers.” Additional renderings include “magicians,” DOUAY and “those who made use of evil powers.” BBE Sorcery is associated with divination, a Satanic art in which the knowledge of the future and secret things is acquired.

The word used here is found six times in Scripture. Moses confronted “sorcerers” in Egypt, who duplicated a few of the plagues (Ex 7:11). A “witch,” or “sorceress,” NKJV was condemned to death by the Law (Ex 22:16). A “sorcerer” NKJV was not to be found among the children of Israel (Deut 18:10). King Manasseh consulted with sorcerers (2 Chron 33:6). Malachi prophesied of God coming against sorcerers in judgment (Mal 3:5).

The Chaldeans

All versions translate the word “Chaldeans,” with the exception of the NIV, NIB, and NLT, which use the word “astrologers.” The “Chaldeans” refers to professional experts in Chaldean wisdom. Their understanding was associated with the idolatry prevalent in Babylonia, in which light and the heavenly bodies were considered a source of wisdom and knowledge. These were the elite among the wise men. They are mentioned in relation to this dream (2:2,5,10). From among this number certain suggested

Nebuchadnezzar set up a great image, demanding that all men worship it (3:8). These also were consulted concerning the king's dream of a tree that was cut down (4:7). Belshazzar called for them when the hand appeared writing on the wall (5:7,11).

WAS THIS PRETENTIOUS KNOWLEDGE?

These consultants were respected and influential in the Babylonian empire. It should be obvious they did not have a track, record of failure and disappointment. If that was the case, God would receive no glory for comparing the wisdom that came from Him with theirs. I understand some respected Christian thinkers feel the knowledge of these men was wholly spurious. In my judgment, this view cannot be justified. If the woman from Philippi, with a spirit of divination, could speak most precisely concerning Paul and company (Acts 16:16-17), why should it be thought strange that such phenomenon could occur elsewhere?

God's Condemnation

The fact that God condemns unlawful sources of knowledge suggests they are very real, not that they are pretentious and spurious (Ex 22:18; Lev 19:26-31; 20:6,27; Deut 13:1-5; 18:9-14; 1 Sam 15:23; 1 Chron 10:13; 2 Chron 33:6; Isa 8:19; 19:3; 29:4; Mal 3:5; Gal 5:20).

We Wrestle Against Very Real Powers

Those in Christ are said to engage in aggressive warfare "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12). Let no one question the reality of these wicked personalities, or their influence among men. They traffic in knowledge, through which they influence simple souls. There are thoughts fostered by them that cannot be overthrown with human logic, philosophy, and earthly arguments. These bastions of thought can only be cast down by weapons that are given to us by God (2 Cor 10:3-5).

Powers That Hinder Angels

Nowhere in all of Scripture are angels ever represented as being challenged or hindered by men. There are, however, higher forms of wicked intelligence and power that can restrain even mighty angels. Later in Daniel we will read of an evil principality that successfully withstood a holy angel for twenty-one days (Dan 10:13). Let no one question the reality of these powers, or imagine they only generate delusions and illusions.

Satanic Power Is Real

We must not allow religious sophists to persuade us Satanic power is only a pretension! Ponder the power that Satan employed against Job.

- Raised up the Sabeans to take Job's oxen and asses and kill all of the servants caring for them but one (Job 1:14-15).
- Caused fire to fall from heaven, burning up Job's sheep, and all of the servants watching them, except one (1:16).
- Moved the Chaldeans to come in three bands against Job, taking away all of his camels, and killing all but one of the servants watching them (1:17).
- Brought a great wind from the wilderness that smote the house in which his sons and daughters were, killing them all (1:17-18).
- Smote Job with sore boils from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet (2:7).

Is there anyone that would affirm all of these were mere illusions?

There are other instances of Satanic power that are identified by the Holy Spirit.

- Two men from the country of the Gergesenes, who became exceeding fierce because of demons (Matt 8:28).
- A man made dumb, or speechless, by demons (Matt 9:32-33).
- A man made deaf and dumb by a demon (Matt 12:22).
- A young girl grievously vexed by a demon (Matt 15:22).
- A son made a lunatic by a demon, who also often threw the young boy into fire and water (Matt 17:15).
- A woman Satan bound for eighteen years with a spirit of infirmity, so that she was bowed together, and could not raise up (Luke 13:11-16).
- When entering a herd of swine, demons drove them over a cliff into the sea, where they drowned (Matt 8:32).
- There are demons who promote doctrines and spirits that seduce souls (1 Tim 4:1).

Who would dare to suggest these were mere misrepresentations? If these things were not real, they would not have required the miraculous intervention of the Lord.

Knowledge in the Demonic World

Not only is the dark world associated with external phenomenon, it is also related to knowledge.

- One of the primary areas of which we are told is that of doctrines, or teachings, that are actually promoted by the demonic world (1 Tim 4:1).
- When Jesus confronted a man with an "unclean spirit" in a local synagogue he said, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24).
- The demon possessing the Gadarene cried out, "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not" (Mark 5:7).
- The demon possessing the two men of the Gergesenes said to Jesus, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (Matt 8:29).
- The woman with a spirit of divination said of Paul and company, "These men are the servants of the

most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation” (Acts 16:17).

- An “evil spirit” who was confronted by some pretending exorcists confessed “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?” (Acts 19:15).
- There is a wisdom that is “devilish,” or “demonic” NKJV (James 3:15).
- Satan’s first assault of humanity was through the intellect (Gen 3:1-5).
- Satan can corrupt men’s mind through subtlety (2 Cor 11:2).
- Satan has “false apostles,” who “transform themselves into the apostles of Christ” (2 Cor 11:13).

Make no mistake about this, Satan and his hosts traffic in knowledge. He has the power to give men wisdom – wisdom that is not lawful, and is unproductive, but wisdom nevertheless.

King Nebuchadnezzar

Nebuchadnezzar was no ordinary king. His military exploits were extraordinary. His architecture was magnificent, remaining until this day. Why would one imagine he would be duped by men who merely invented explanations? I find it difficult to believe he would have surrounded himself with obvious pretenders, and those who had no access to knowledge outside of nature.

I have taken this time to briefly comment on these matters because of the tendency of some to dismiss the Babylonian wise men as mere sophists. These men had knowledge, but it was not legitimate. It was above the norm, yet had boundaries beyond which it could not go.

God will reveal the inferiority of their knowledge – not by showing that it was spurious, but that there were matters it could not decipher. That kind of test would be wholly without purpose if these men had no access to genuine, yet unlawful and limited, knowledge.

DANIEL NOT CALLED AT FIRST

It ought to be noted that Nebuchadnezzar did NOT call Daniel at the first. Prior to this, he had already found Daniel and his friends “ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm,” in “all matters of wisdom and understanding” (1:20). Why, then, not call for them first? Why did the king first seek an answer from the wise men who had already been proved to be inferior?

It is the nature of the flesh to gravitate to flesh. That is why Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). The fleshly nature (which is all Nebuchadnezzar had) cannot rise above itself. It makes little difference how frequently the workings of the Lord are seen, or how often its wisdom is frustrated. The flesh always prefers its own. This is seen in Israel’s gravitation to unbelief, even after God worked mightily among them by deliverance, provision, and strength. After all God had done for and through them, He lamented over the whole nation. “I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts” (Isa 65:2). After three years of going about and doing good, healing all who were oppressed by the devil, the Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them

which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Matt 23:37).

Why did such conditions exist? Simply because "flesh" gravitates to "flesh," returning to old ways, even though they have amply been shown to be inferior, and sometimes even sinful. That is why Nebuchadnezzar resorted to the vastly inferior "magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans." That is why he forgot Daniel. He had more confidence in Babylonian wise men than Daniel.

That is the external view of the situation. Behind the scenes, however, the Lord was maneuvering the circumstances in order to bring Daniel into the limelight.

SO THEY CAME

"So they came and stood before the king." Obediently, and without delay, the wise men of the empire assembled before the king. They had no reason to think this was going to be different than other times when they came to consult him. However, they were being assembled like the prophets of Baal before Elijah. The futility of their wisdom to open the revelations of God would be made known in a most decisive manner.

THE FACTS ARE PRESENTED

"And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream." Other versions read, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream," NKJV and "I have had such a dream that my spirit is troubled by the desire to understand it." NRSV Nebuchadnezzar made known everything he knew. He dreamed a dream, and was agitated to know what it meant. Quantitatively, that was not much. In reality, however, it was the full storehouse of his knowledge on the matter.

Those are the facts in the case, and truly wise men should be able to take it from there. Drawing upon their vast resources, they should be able to answer.

THE POVERTY OF WORLDLY WISDOM

"4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation." Do not forget what is being made known in this incident. It

is something for all succeeding generations to learn. The wisdom that does NOT come from God cannot possibly decipher messages that come from Him. This is true of dreams, which are the lowest level of revelation, and are as “chaff” when compared with a word from God (Jer 23:28). The relevance of this knowledge becomes apparent when one considers the academic slant of nearly all contemporary Bible teaching. Too, the church has now wed itself to the world in many areas, including (1) understanding the human mind, (2) an accent on original language, (3) motivational techniques, (4) finances, etc.

THE CHALDEANS

The term “Chaldeans” is applied to the entire nation of the Babylonians (Isa 23:13; Isa 43:14; 47:1; 48:14; Jer 21:4; Dan 1:4; Hab 1:4). However, in this text, it is used for a select number of the Chaldeans, who were among the soothsayers and wise men of the country (Dan 2:2,4,5,10; 4:7; 5:7,11,30).

This same approach is taken to the term “Jews.” From one point of view, it represents all of the people (2 Chron 32:16; Esth 3:6; Jer 40:12; Matt 2:2; John 2:13; 4:22). The same word is also used of a select number of the nation (John 19:31,38; Acts 9:22,23; 17:5; 23:30; 2 Cor 11:24).

IN THE SYRIACK

“ Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack .” Other versions say they spoke in “Aramaic.” NKJS/NASB/NIV The word “Syriack” means “Syrian tongue.” The word “Aramaic” signifies the language of the Syrians itself. In other words, they spoke to him in the native language of Babylon. This was a strange language to the Jews, fulfilling the prophecy of Jeremiah . “Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say ” (Jer 5:15).

In speaking to the king in the native language, every possible advantage is being given to the Babylonian wise men. The Lord will leave no stone unturned in His demonstration of the impotence of the world’s wisdom.

LIVE FOREVER

“O king, live for ever . . .” This is a general saying that expressed a desire for the king to live a long, prosperous, and satisfying life. It was also one of high respect for those to whom honor was due. Thus Bathsheba said to David, “Let my lord king David live for ever” (1 Kgs 1:31). Nehemiah said to king Artaxerxes , “Let the king live for ever” (Neh 2:3). Belshazzar’s queen said to him, “O king, live for ever” (Dan 5:10). Daniel addressed Darius the Mede with this words, “O king, live for ever” (Dan 6:21).

TELL US! TELL US!

“ . . . tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.” Here is the first eruption

of the impotence of worldly wisdom. Although some of these men had contact with the nether world of evil spirits, they required assistance from the king. Ignoring his demand that they tell him the dream, they send the matter back to him, asking that he provide them with some details, after which they will gladly give him the meaning.

THE DEMAND AND ITS INCENTIVES

“ 5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. 6 But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.” The Spirit will now provide details that will confirm every possible opportunity will be given for earthly wisdom to prove itself. God does not make diviners “mad,” turn wise men “backward,” or make their knowledge “foolish” (Isa 44:25) without giving them due opportunity to prove themselves.

The contest that is being set up is much like that of Elijah with the prophets of Baal. When Israel and the prophets of Baal gathered on mount Carmel, the fiery prophet Elijah would give ample opportunity for the false prophets to prove the validity of their role. Both Baal’s prophets and Elijah would deal with the same thing – fire consuming their sacrifice. Elijah allowed these prophets to call upon their God from morning until evening. If they were really prophets, and their god was real, that was sufficient time for those things to be confirmed.

What we have in the text before us is the provision of adequate time for the Babylonian wise men to garner help from every resource available to them. This is a Divine provision – a context in which the Lord will work for His own glory.

REMEMBERED, YET GONE

“ The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me . . . ” Here is the first challenge to the wise men of Babylon. If they have access to supernatural knowledge (and evidence is that they did), here is an area where it is surely needed. Nebuchadnezzar cannot recall his dream. Thus, the wise men, through some revelation, or by studying the stars, or through some activity of sorcery, must uncover the dream itself.

This circumstance does not suggest there is no such thing as supernatural knowledge that is evil – such as the woman with the spirit of divination precisely identifying Paul, or the demons in the Gadarene demoniac being able to identify Jesus, and knowing they were destined for torment. What is DOES mean, is that Satanic forces cannot probe the purposes of God. They cannot discover what God has determined, or uncover a revelation given by God, but forgotten by men. This will be developed

later.

THE DREAM AND THE INTERPRETATION

“ . . . if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof . . . ” The requirements for the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans are clear. There is no ambiguity. These men must tell Nebuchadnezzar what he has dreamed, then provide its meaning.

STRONG INCENTIVES

“ . . . ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. 6 But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor . . . ” If men require an incentive, the need is certainly met in Nebuchadnezzar’s commitment. The incentive has both a negative and positive side, and both are equally strong.

First, the threat. It is a very real one, and the men will sense immediately that it is to be taken seriously. “You will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be made a rubbish heap,” NASB “you will be cut in bits and your houses made waste.” BBE This threat is so arresting that it nearly stands alone in Scripture. Once, in the Psalms, God speaks similarly to those who dare to forget Him. “Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver” (Psa 50:22). He also told the house of Judah He would be like a wild lion, tearing them and leaving them (Hos 5:14; 13:8). This is what Samuel did to Agag, hewing him in pieces before the Lord (1 Sam 15:33). David did the same with the Ammonites, cutting them with saws and axes (1 Chron 20:3). The saints do well to give thanks for living in “the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2), and being “under grace” instead of Law Rom 6:14-15)!

Second, the benefit. “But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor.” Here are two things attractive to the flesh – gifts and great honor. Many men have lost their own souls to obtain these things. Keep in mind, this was the king of the most glorious empire of the world that was speaking. When such an one as Nebuchadnezzar gives and honor, they will of great significance. Thus the king has provided the wise men of his empire with reason enough to come up with what he demands.

THE DEMAND STANDS

“ . . . therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.” The king does not back down. If the wise men possess the wisdom and the powers they affirm, they will be able to satisfy his demands. He is asking them to do only what they have alleged they can do.

TESTING THE CLAIMS OF THE WORLDLY WISE

“ 7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it. 8 The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. 9 But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof.”

This dialog is important. In it every possible advantage is given to the wise men of Babylon. Like the ten plagues provided an opportunity for Pharaoh to acknowledge the truth, so Nebuchadnezzar’s requirements give an chance for the wise men to acknowledge the deficiency of their wisdom. He resorts to threats, terror, and even rewards, seeking to draw out any genuine wisdom in these men. However, it is not possible to cause wisdom to surface where it does not exist, or where it has not been granted.

THEY ANSWERED AGAIN

There is no originality in the flesh. After they have heard staggering threats of destroying households, and after they have heard of receiving rewards and honor, what will these men say? They simply repeat what they had said before. The reservoir of their wisdom is too shallow, and their knowledge is too limited. Thus , “They answered a second time,” NASB or “Once more they replied.” NIV

FLESH REASONS

“Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it . . .” Fear could not push intelligent words from their lips! The desire for great reward and honor could not provoke them to speak wisely, or even to couch their request in different words. It is true there are occasions when “A soft answer turneth away wrath” (Prov 15:1). However, that tactic will not work here.

We see here the effects of the devil upon the minds of men. Even though his artifices obviously cannot produce what is really required, he blinds men into thinking at least some of the answers can come from him. Maybe the arts of the wise men cannot reveal the king’s dream to them, but they will surely be able to tell what it means.

Some Observations

It should not surprise us that countless numbers of people live with the notion that Christless resources can at least provide some of the answers. Perhaps if someone wise or more knowledgeable can at least give them a few facts, they will be able to take the matter from there – without Christ, without the Spirit, and without the wisdom that comes from above. There are more people who think in this manner than we dare to believe. Such are slaves of Satan, even though they do not know it.

STALLING FOR TIME

“ . . . I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me.” The king senses the men are stalling for time – not because they imagine they can receive an answer, but because they hope he will be able to remember the dream. Perhaps they also thought themselves capable of coming up with a witty answer that would assuage the king. Such is not possible, however, because the mighty God is drying up the well of their wisdom, proving it to be filled with profitless dust and vanity. The God of heaven is pushing their backs to the wall, making the king ready for the introduction of Daniel.

These men wanted to retain their reputation for knowledge, all the while casting the credit for deficiency upon the king, instead of themselves and their diabolical sources of knowledge.

It is still true that certain people have a reputation for being wise, even though they produce no real proof of it.

THERE IS BUT ONE DECREE

“But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you.” Other versions read, “If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you,” NIV and “if you do not tell me the dream, there is but one verdict for you.” NRSV The king continues to pile reason upon reason why they ought to employ their powers of wisdom.

- If they do not tell him the dream and interpret it, they will be cut in pieces.
- If they fail in their assignment, their houses will be made a dung hill, burned down to the ground.
- If they show him his dream, and interpret it, he will personally give them great gifts and rewards.
- If they fulfill their assignment, he will personally give them great honor.
- He has charged them with seeking to gain time, thereby urging their utmost sobriety, honesty, and obedience.
- If they fail to do what he says, there is only one alternative, and it will not be good.

The king will not change his demand. He will not alter or remove the sentence if they cannot do what he has demanded. There will be no appeals to a higher court, and no one will be able to deliver them from his hand.

LYING AND CORRUPT WORDS

“ . . . for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed.” Other versions read, “For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed,” NASB and “You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change.” NIV

One should not expect a king, particularly Nebuchadnezzar, to be an easily deceived and thoughtless man. He saw through their delaying tactic. I do not understand Nebuchadnezzar to mean these wise men had agreed to purposely deceive the king. Rather, they had agreed among themselves to use this stall tactic if they were faced with something they could not do. This seems plain from Nebuchadnezzar's additional words, "till the time be changed." He thus saw them as stalling until the circumstance hopefully was modified. Perhaps the king would remember his dream. Maybe his anger would assuage, and he would be more understanding of their ignorance. It might be that he would repent of such a harsh demand, and simply let the matter go. Things certainly could not get any worse for them. Perhaps they would get better.

The king knows they are not honest in their request. Their words are intended to cover their ignorance, and draw Nebuchadnezzar's attention away from them and to himself.

These men were operating by a false worldly principle: "Time is on our side." How often have you heard such an expression – as though things naturally tended to get better. This, however, is only a delusion. Time is against those who do not acknowledge the truth – particularly when they do not admit their miserable deficiencies, and turn their backs on the resources that have brought on that inadequacy.

I WILL KNOW THAT YOU CAN

" . . . therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof." Other versions read, "therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation," NASB and "So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me." NIV

The idea is that if they can correctly tell what is past, yet cannot be remembered, they will surely be able to tell what is to come. It is quite true that those who cannot properly perceive the past have no business dabbling in the future.

Here, then, is the final test for the wise men of Babylon. This is the means by which the king will know they are, in fact, capable of interpreting the dream. If they can tell the king what he has dreamed, they will, in that very deed, prove they are capable of telling him what it meant.

ANOTHER THING TO SEE

There is something else to see here – another dreadful trait of the flesh. This can be seen in Nebuchadnezzar. Although he had been exposed to the superior wisdom that comes from God, yet he clung tenaciously to the imagination the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, could possibly come up with the answer. It is as though he refused to let the traditions of his fathers go, even though were proving to be woefully deficient. That is the nature of the flesh.

He did not immediately turn to Daniel to exercise the wisdom and knowledge he had already shown. Nor, indeed, did he seek wisdom from the God of the Hebrews. He chose to continue to make every effort to push wisdom out of the mouths of those who obviously were devoid of it.

The Manner of the Flesh

That is the manner of the flesh. That is precisely why those enslaved to sin continue to wallow in it, whether it is strong drink, drugs, lust, or some other form of fleshly indulgence. There are also countless multitudes who continue to expect good things from dead churches, and wise theological discourses from those who lack spiritual understanding. The tactic of Nebuchadnezzar is not strange. It remains all about us. Multitudes of people continue attempting to draw water out of broken traditional cisterns that can hold no water (Jer 2:13). They continue to depend upon resources that have failed them, and sit at tables that have not fed them.

Even though there is such a thing as spiritual bread that does not satisfy, yet men continue to buy it, investing their resources in vanity. It is no wonder that the Lord cries out, “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not?” (Isa 55:2). For some, it is easy to see the folly of Nebuchadnezzar trying to get answers from men who do not have them. But it is not so easy for them to relate that circumstance to the religious climate of our time. Believers are actually being subjected to vastly inferior wisdom.

BEYOND HUMAN CAPABILITIES

“ 10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. 11 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.” Now the Chaldeans begin to reason with the king. They have not resorted to reasoning before, but have only made two requests for the king to tell them what he has dreamed. Now we will be confronted with an example of fleshly reasoning – how men think who are not motivated by faith, but trust in the arm of the flesh. The flesh, or sinful nature, has a certain mind-set, and it always breaks out when pushed to its limit. You will note that the world is the boundary of such reasoning. The flesh is confined to sense and time, and cannot rise above it.

KNOWN LIMITATIONS

“There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter . . .” Other versions read, “There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks!” NIV and “There is no one on earth who can reveal what the king demands!” NRSV

First, this was NOT the truth , as will be amply shown later. There was a man “on the earth” who “had understanding in all visions and dreams.” Because God had given Daniel this ability, there was no dream that would prove too challenging for him. However, these men were not aware of Daniel, even though their wisdom and understanding had previously been compared with his, and proved to be ten times less. Those who do not keep company with the people of God will not be able to recall them in the hour of crisis.

These men, astute by Babylonish definition, could think no higher than the earth, even though they consorted with spiritual powers. Whatever a person may think of demon power, familiar spirits, divination, necromancy, and the likes, they cannot pull the veil away from anything beyond this world that should be known. Even though demons know of the torment to come (Matt 8:29), they spend no time unveiling it to the sons of men.

There is a consistent mark on those whose wisdom does not come from God. They deal with “the earth,” things that are temporal and will pass away. Later, when Daniel stands before Nebuchadnezzar, he will say, “But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets” (Dan 2:28). But no such confession is made by these wise men. At this point, their minds are nailed to the earth like Sisera’s head (Judges 4:21), and they cannot rise above it.

Thus, the wise men confessed the limitations of their own craft. They did not do so voluntarily, but had to be pressed to do so.

THE WORLD OPERATES WITHIN ITS LIMITS

“ . . . therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean.” Not only were these men limited to the earth, they confined their thinking to their own locale. They spoke as though there were no other sources of wisdom than the Babylonian magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans. They had the “We are it” syndrome, and were unable to break out of it.

NEW Things Can Happen

Note how they relied upon the past to assess the present and the future. Like Solomon, they reasoned “there is no new thing under the sun” (Eccl 1:9). This, however, though true in Solomon’s day is not intended to be a saying for all time – even though countless preachers have so represented it. Lest we forget, it is God who said, “Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert” (Isa 43:19). Again He declared, “Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them” (Isa 42:9). And again, “for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth” (Jer 31:22).

- Prior to Noah, there had never been a global flood in which “all flesh died” (Gen 7:21).
- Before the destruction of Sodom and Gommorah, no cities had suffered “the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7).
- Prior to Abraham, no barren woman ever had a child, especially by a man whose reproductive powers were “now dead” (Rom 4:19).
- Prior to the tower of Babel body of people had ever had their speech confused (Gen 11:7).
- Before the birth of Jesus, no virgin had ever conceived and brought forth a child (Matt 1:23).
- Before Christ’s death, no one had ever destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14), spoiled principalities and powers (Col 2:15), or put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26).
- Before the exaltation of Christ, the Holy Spirit had not been given to men as it is now (John 7:39).

All of these things, and more, took place “on the earth.”

There is such a thing as “newness of life” and “newness of spirit” (Rom 6:4; 7:6), a “new man” (Col 3:10), a “new covenant” (Heb 8:8), and a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17) – and all of them have taken place “under the sun.”

Solomon’s view was a partial and low one. His statement is not the standard for the body of Christ. The Chaldean wise men were not correct in limiting the possibilities, or confining their thinking to the earth.

A TIME TO DEMAND HARD THINGS

“ And it is a rare thing that the king requireth , and there is none other that can show it before the king . . . ” Other versions read that the matter was “a difficult thing,” NKJV “too difficult,” NIV “is extra ordinary,” DARBY “a very hard one,” BBE and “an impossible thing.” NLT

Like many, these men had been coasting on the hill of normality. Nothing had occurred that challenged their faulty reasoning and meager resources. That is the effect of the blight of mediocrity! Nothing is demanded that necessitates one moving out of themselves.

But Nebuchadnezzar will have nothing to do with their reasoning. He demands something that has never been demanded of them before, and they are expected to rise to the occasion. In this case, the Lord was setting the stage for the introduction of Daniel, and a revelation of a kingdom superior to all earthly kingdoms. The matter was “too difficult” for them, but not for God. It was “a rare thing” for them, but not for the man who walks by faith. It was “impossible” for men, but not for God.

Something to Think About

There remains in the flesh the tendency to recoil at anything difficult or challenging –

particularly when it comes to things pertaining to life and godliness. But this tendency must be put down, for it is closer to Babylon than to Jerusalem, and is more related to earth than to heaven.

- What do you suppose would have happened if Noah viewed the building of the ark as “too difficult?” After all, no one had ever required the building of one before, and no one had engaged in such an endeavor.
- Had anyone ever been required to walk through the Red Sea on dry ground before Israel was commanded to do so?
- How would Israel have fared if they had told Joshua no one had ever asked a body of people to walk around the walls of a city before, even expecting them to fall down? Had anything like that ever been asked of anyone?
- Or how about a shepherd boy facing a giant with a sling and a stone? Had such a thing been required of anyone before?
- Before Ezekiel, had a prophet ever been asked to lay on his side three hundred and ninety days, then turn over and lay on the other side for forty days (Ezek 4:4-6)?
- How about Isaiah being required to walk naked and barefoot for three years (Isa 20:2-3)?

Settle it in your mind that God will not always ask easy things of you! If Nebuchadnezzar asked for his servants to do difficult things, much more will God ask His servants to do so! Do not doubt it! Ponder some of His requirements.

- “Rejoice in the Lord always.” (Phil 4:4)
- “Mortify the deeds of the body” (Col 3:5)
- “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph 6:10)
- “Seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col 3:1).
- “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col 3:2).
- “Put on the whole armor of God” (Eph 6:11).
- “Lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim 6:12).
- “Be not weary in well doing” (2 Thess 3:13).
- “Cast not away your confidence” (Heb 10:35).

When such things are asked, let no soul respond, “the thing God asks is too difficult!” Rather, seek the resources that come from him. Get your mind above the earth, and consider that what the Lord demands He gives grace to fulfill.

THE “EXCEPT” IS KNOWN

“ . . . except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.” Now the case of the king’s advisors is greatly complicated. At the first, they confined their thinking to the earth, referring to other men and other kings. But now, they catch a small glimpse of something else. Their knowledge is limited, but they know enough to do something with it if they only will.

There was the matter of Deity. Because of their limited knowledge, they spoke of “gods.” Yet,

they realized there were resources transcendent to men. Even here, however, they attempt to mingle the wisdom of the world with this small fragment of knowledge – “the gods.” They add, “and they do not live among men.” NIV That is, they were sure men do not have access to Deity. A real God did not have direct dealings with men. That is what they thought. But they could not possibly have been more wrong.

- In the beginning, God walked and talked with man (Gen 3:8), thereby making known His desire for man’s fellowship.
- Enoch “walked with God” (Gen 5:22,24).
- Noah “walked with God” (Gen 6:9).
- Abraham was the “friend of God” (James 2:23).
- David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14).
- God “was with” Solomon, and magnified him exceedingly (1 Chron 1:1).
- God “was with” Asa (2 Chron 15:9).
- God “was with” Joseph (Acts 7:9).
- God announces “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa 57:15).

All of this was BEFORE the Lord Jesus and the “day of salvation.” Now the Savior is named “Immanuel, which is translated, ‘God with us’” NKJV (Matt 1:23). The Father now “dwells” in believers and “walks” in them (2 Cor 6:16).

The wise men of Babylon were wrong – 100% wrong. Even though what Nebuchadnezzar asked from them seemed impossible, it was a small thing for the God of heaven and earth! They should have aggressively called for Daniel themselves, taken hold of his skirt, and said , “We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you” (Zech 8:23). But they did not, for God’s purpose was to shine the light on His prophet, not them. When men live at a distance from God, they do not do what they should, nor are they strongly inclined to do so.

A JUSTIFIED PENALTY

“ 12 For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.” Other versions read, “Because of this the king became indignant and very furious, and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon,” NASB and “This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon.” NIV

There were at least two reasons why the king became furious. First, the men whose business was being wise and understanding could not do what he asked. Second, they said his request was unreasonable, impossible, and wholly without precedent. He seemed to sense the dream he had was

important, yet was wholly frustrated by the shallowness of Babylon's wise men.

It may appear on the surface that Nebuchadnezzar's judgment was too harsh. However, he had only required these men to do what they alleged they were capable of doing. Ponder the extent of his judgment. He did not merely order the execution of the men before him, but "all of the wise in Babylon." He now saw their entire order as a lie and a liability. He therefore determined to rid himself of them all. They had proved to be vain, fundamentally ignorant of critical matters, and prone to blame the king himself for their lack of ability.

You can see that Nebuchadnezzar had no interest in building the careers of his subjects unless they were able to do what they were assigned. He had no place in his court for advisors that could not advise, wise men that had no wisdom, or star gazers that had no essential answers. It would revolutionize both religion and politics were such requirements placed upon people today. Those who occupy positions should be able to fill them.

CONCLUSION

Thus the Lord has again revealed His inscrutable works and masterful maneuvering. Before He unveils Daniel, to whom He will show secrets, He first reveals the need for such a man. He does this with a dream – one of sufficient impact that the king cannot let go of it. What God gives to Nebuchadnezzar is more than earth can know or decipher. Like everything God gives, His own influence is required to understand and profit from it.

All of this has been done without Daniel being present. The way is being prepared for him without him even knowing it. This also is a Divine manner. The Lord can "make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert" (Isa 43:19). He can move Babylon's obstacles out of the way, and provide a circumstance where young Daniel can make known the mind of the Lord.

THE LOWEST REVELATION IS TOO HIGH FOR THE FLESH

There is an important truth to be seen here. The lowest form of Divine revelation is too high for the flesh. No manner of earthly wisdom can decipher the smallest revelation from God. Dreams are the lowest form of Divine revelation. It is a manner of Divine communication that God can have with the heathen, or those who know Him not. Yet, such communications soared high above all forms of human wisdom and fleshly expertise.

The people of God must come away from all forms of reliance upon, and trust in, the mind of the

flesh. There is altogether too much dependency in the body of Christ on inferior forms of knowledge and understanding. God's people should seek to Him for their understanding (Isa 8:19), not to fallen men and a defiled realm.

THE CHURCH MUST BE MORE DEMANDING

It is time for the church to be more demanding of worldly experts! When they seek to hawk their inferior wares among us, we must challenge them to do more than their feeble crafts can do. When the psychiatrists come to us, or invade the thoughts of our children, let them be required to accomplish what God requires! Let them be compelled to enable people to forget the things that are behind, cast out fear, be strong in the Lord, and be bold and courageous. These are things God can do. They are also things these men cannot do. But if they will company among us and sell their wares, they must be required to do the things God can do!

When the motivators creep into the church, they must be recognized for what they are, and required to accomplish what God desires. Let them move people to seek a city that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Let them enable people to crucify the flesh, mortify the tendencies of the flesh, and set their affection on things above, not on things on the earth! These are things God requires. If they are truly motivators, these are things they must do!

When the financial experts push his way into congregations of believers, let them be required to produce cheerful givers, those who are willing to give all that they have, and even above their means. Let them move people to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven rather than upon earth, where moth and rust corrupts, and thieves break through and steal.

The people of God have no reason to reduce the requirements God has placed upon His people. There is no more justification for tolerating carnality and spiritual deficiency in the church than there was for allowing unwise wise men to be in Nebuchadnezzar's court.

Indeed, there is much to be learned from this Divinely orchestrated incident! We will be the wiser for learning those matters.

The Prophecy of Daniel

THE HANDLING OF A LIFE- THREATENING CRISIS

Lesson #6

INTRODUCTION

The stage has been set for the unveiling of Daniel, the man chosen by God to reveal Divine determinations to the sons of men. These preparations did not involve Daniel sitting at the feet of a renown Hebrew scholar. His immediate formal education was at the feet of heathen Babylonians. In his conventional training, he was not taught the Law of God, but the language and literature of the Chaldeans. His preparations were not accomplished in the Temple of God, but in a Babylonian school for captive eunuchs, under the authority of a Babylonian prince and one of his special subordinates.

He was living during a period of fierce and unparalleled Divine chastening. The revealed religion

of his people had been held in disdain. The commandment of God had been disobeyed, thus incurring His indignation. The house of God, once filled with the glory of God, had been destroyed. The city of God, where He had chosen to place His name, had been devastated. The nation who once came out of mighty Egypt with great spoil, had themselves become the spoil of another heathen nation – Babylon.

While peaceful environs are to be preferred for the culturing of the soul and preparation for Divine employment, they are not the exclusive realm for training. By no means does this suggest men are to willingly seek heathen surroundings to prepare for Divine employment. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, did not choose to go to Babylon, they were carried there as captives. No man or woman of faith has ever preferred to ready themselves for the service of God in a domain that gives neither honor nor glory to Him.

The surroundings in which the four children of Judah were cultured for Divine use are not intended to be the kingdom standard. This is not the manner in which Isaiah, Jeremiah, or John the Baptist were prepared for Divine service. Nor, indeed. Did Jesus use this manner to equip His Apostles to carry the Gospel to the whole world.

WHAT IS THE POINT?

What, then, is the point of this narrative? Why has God provided such detail about these four captive children? As with “all Scripture,” it is in order “that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” NASB (2 Tim 3:17). The Lord is showing Himself to us. He is making known that faith can access Him from any place – from the Temple to the lion’s den, and from Jerusalem to the fiery furnace. Faith is not limited by age or by circumstance. Allow me to briefly develop this thought. It is critical to the proper handling of Scripture. It is also essential for the encouragement of those who have put their trust in God.

God Is Greater Than Circumstance

It is possible for this point to be formally acknowledged, yet grossly neglected in practice. Our theology must find a place in our heart as well as our mind. A heartless view of God will neither sustain the soul nor bring glory to the Subject of theology.

One of the great contemporary weaknesses is the undue exaltation of circumstance. There are whole bodies of training and profession that are solely for the handling of circumstance. There are professionals in the handling of all manner of circumstance: emotional, domestic, financial, and matters of habit and moral enslavement. It is certainly not my purpose to speak derogatorily of those who do good in these areas. NO person who brings true advantage to men and women has done wrong.

However, earthly conditions and environments, though very real and important, are not fundamental in spiritual life. They are always subordinate. Jesus outlined the proper approach to life.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt 6:33).

We are admonished to give “thanks always FOR all things” (Eph 5:20), and to give thanks “IN everything” (1 Thess 5:18). Additionally, it is possible to be instructed “every where and IN all things” (Phil 4:12). This being true, no circumstance of itself possesses the power to overcome us. It has passed through the filter of Divine purpose, and comes with any required escapes. No circumstance has the power to shut us out from the presence of the Lord. None have the power to neutralize faith or withhold the promises of God from us. That is why it is wrong to fasten our eyes upon difficult situations, with no regard for our access to God, His grace, and His power. Our text confirms this is the case by relating the working of the Lord during unusually difficult times and situations.

Faith Brings Divine Instruction

Every facet of salvation is “through faith” (Eph 2:8). Faith is the channel through which Divine supplies are received, and acceptable works are accomplished. One of the remarkable supplies that come to believers is instruction, or Divine tutelage. It is when every man is “taught by God.” This benefit is expressed in a number of ways in Scripture. It is couched in the language of promise.

- “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psa 32:8).
- “For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him” (Isa 28:26).
- “Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will He teach sinners in the way. The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach his way” (Psa 25:8).
- “What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall He teach in the way that He shall choose” (Psa 25:12).
- “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths” (Isa 2:3)
- “Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts” (Isa 28:9).
- “And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isa 54:13).

While this is the norm in Christ Jesus, and under the New Covenant, it was not so in the time of Daniel. In this young man we will see the effectiveness of faith. In a spiritually hostile environment he will be given wisdom to assess a dangerous situation. God will teach him how to respond to a threat against his life. He will also be given the knowledge and understanding of a dream he did not have.

The hour of crisis and the time of trouble are not times to get faith, but occasions to use it. Those who neglect their faith, not fighting to maintain it, will fall in the time of difficulty.

The Lord Comes To His People

There is a sense in which the people of God are never without Him. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa 41:10). “I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD” (Jer 15:20). “. . . for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb 13:5). Faith depends upon the presence and support of the Lord.

Yet, there are times when the believer must approach God for special wisdom and protection. Because of the nature of life in “this present evil world” (Gal 14), times arise when special and singular grace is required. The life of faith does not run on automatic pilot . That is why a religion that leaves men detached from the Lord and unaware of His presence is so lethal. While men may imagine such a religion to be satisfactory during the normalities of life, it utterly fails them in the hour of crisis, temptation, and trial.

This is the greatest single reason for the fall of Christian people, including their leaders. They have sought to live apart from their faith, supposing that Divine benefits can be realized without the involvement of the minds, hearts, and spirits of the people.

However, when we draw nigh to God, He WILL draw nigh to us (James 4:8). That is never more true than in the hour of trial.

Chastening Does Not Mean Abandonment

No person who is chastened by God finds the experience pleasant. Indeed, chastening is not intended to be a time of rich fellowship and joy. Thus it is written, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb 12:11). Keep in mind, Daniel was living during a time when God was chastening the nation of Israel. Yet, he did not throw up his hands in despair. He sensed in his heart that chastening was not Divine abandonment, but holy correction.

The Lord does not reject the cries and resolves of those who are chastened, for “whom the Lord

loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” (Heb 12:6). This is particularly true when He is chastening a body of people, like Israel in the Babylonian captivity. In this case, Daniel was not personally being chastened, but was among a body of people that were being corrected. He therefore relied on his personal acquaintance with the Lord, as well as his formal affiliation with Him as a seed of Abraham.

If God’s people live in a time of governmental collapse due to Divine chastening, or the correction of the church for its failure to walk in the light, they must not despair. There are even whole segments of time in which the chastening hand of the Lord is dominate , as in the days prophesied by Amos. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it” (Amos 8:11-12). Even then, the Lord is still accessible to those who believe, even if they are in the minority among those who are called by His name.

God Can Keep Us From Falling

The Spirit holds this truth before us: God is “is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24). This is a grand reality that is often withheld from the people of God by their teachers and leaders. Apart from the faithful ministry of my father, who has departed to be with the Lord, I recall precious few who ever spoke of this matter in the religious circles I occupied. It simply was not something people talked about. Yet, all of us need to know this. That, of course, is why it is recorded in Scripture.

Daniel was acquainted with this fact through the writings of David. “For Thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not Thou deliver my feet from falling , that I may walk before God in the light of the living?” (Psa 56:13). And again, “For Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling ” (Psa 116:8).

Those who live in a time of chastening can still be kept from falling. “God is able to make” those trusting in Him “to stand” (Rom 14:4). In our text, we will see HOW the Lord can do this. Daniel is in a foreign land, under a heathen ruler, and his life is being threatened. Yet, in all of this, God will make Him stand, giving Him strong faith, wisdom, and kindred believers.

CAUGHT IN THE VORTEX OF HUMAN WRATH

“ 13 And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his

fellows to be slain.” A “vortex” is a whirlpool or maelstrom that pulls things into its center. In our text, that vortex is the wrath of king Nebuchadnezzar. Because of the pretension of Babylon’s wise men, and their inability to describe and interpret his dream, he has passed a sovereign edict. In his fury and anger he “commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon” (2:12).

THE DECREE WENT FORTH

“And the decree went forth . . .” Other versions read, “So the decree was issued,” NIV “So the order went out,” BBE and “On publication of the decree.” NJB The king did not burst forth in anger, then call back his words. His counselors did not advise him to retract his words, and his mind was not changed on the matter. Rather, his command was formalized. It was made a point of immediate law, and the due authorities went to work to fulfill it completely.

You may remember the manner in which the king said the wise men would be put to death. They would be “cut in pieces,” or “torn limb from limb.” NASB The following picture is a duplicate of one found in the Hall of Judgment in the interior of the palace at Khorsabad. It represents “the chief of the slayers” commencing the operation of flaying alive. BARNES COMMENTARY

The text suggests that a considerable number of the wise men were actually slain. The Aramaic version reads, “And the decree went forth, and the wise men were being slain.” No doubt the ones standing before the king when he made this decree were immediately slain. I cannot imagine Nebuchadnezzar allowing them to live when his anger and wrath erupted in this wide-sweeping edict.

Some even suggest that all of the wise men were slain. This, however, cannot be true, for some of these wise men surface later in the book (4:6-7,18; 5:7-8,15). I suppose one might argue that later references were to a new generation of Babylonish wise men. However, this is not possible, since it is generally agreed that the events of chapter four occurred in the same year as those we are presently considering (around 604 B.C.).

The Carnal Mind Is Seen

We see in our text how quickly a carnal mind can forget significant revelations. Worldly people who are exposed to Divine wisdom will soon forget it, for they do not have a mind to retain it. The more the flesh dominates, the more forgetful the individual becomes of Divine interventions and exposure to heavenly wisdom.

This is precisely why the Spirit speaks of the person who has “forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (2 Pet 1:9). As the carnal mind gained dominance, the remarkable cleansing from sin was forgotten. Holy memories cannot be maintained in a carnal mind – even if they are most unusual. Thus, there was a time in Israel’s history “when they forgot the LORD their God” (1 Sam 12:9). Even though

God had dealt mightily with them, “They forgot God their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt” (Psa 106:21).

Over the past fifty years, I have observed many souls in whom God has accomplished great things. These have ranged from unusual healings to spiritual insights that were not common. Some of these very people, because they became carnal in their thinking, soon began living just as though those things never occurred. Like Nebuchadnezzar, they had seen great things, yet handily forgot them when their minds were fastened to the earth.

The people of God do well to take due note of these things, and not allow them to slip from them. We are living in spiritually impoverished times, when it is easy for church members to be more like Nebuchadnezzar than Daniel. Uninformed men may boast of living in times of great revelation and mighty moves of God, but the condition of the American church will not justify such a conclusion. While it is quite true that those who are close to the Lord can, indeed, experience such greatness (like Daniel in Babylon), this is not the lot of the masses.

In The Process of Being Carried Out

Our text, then, is declaring that the decree of Nebuchadnezzar was in the process of being carried out, when Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are introduced. The king’s executioners are in the process of removing a political and social virus from the land.

THEY SOUGHT DANIEL AND HIS FELLOWS

“ . . . and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.” During the carrying out of the king’s decree, a search was made for “Daniel and his fellows.” Other versions read, “and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them,” NASB “and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death,” NIV

Note that Daniel “and his fellows” now have the reputation for being “wise men.” We do not know how much time has passed since they stood before the king and were proved to be “ten times better” than all the wise men in Babylon. The consensus of historians is that the events of chapter two occurred in the same general time frame.

Not only had an urgent decree been issued by the king, there was an atmosphere of violence and hardness that had already started to develop. Whatever bloodthirstiness existed in the hearts of the executioners had now been honed to a fine edge. Perhaps they were becoming more expert in their commission as they moved along.

This was, indeed, a most difficult situation! The officials are not seeking for Daniel and his

friends in order to question them, but to kill them. They are not attempting to find them so they may be given an opportunity to tell the king his dream and the interpretation of it. They fully intend to abruptly terminate their lives. The most powerful king in all the world has sent them on their mission, and the government ruling the world stands behind fully them. From any view, other than that of faith, this is a hopeless situation.

GOD IS SETTING THE STAGE

While the Spirit supplies us with the facts in the case, strength and encouragement is not ministered to us by the facts themselves. It is the purpose of God, that drives these circumstances, that gives them edifying power. I do not doubt that the devil, together with his principalities and powers, have entered into this situation with a mind to eliminate Daniel and “his friends.” However, he is but a temporary vassal in the hands of the Lord.

The “God of gods” (Psa 136:2) is orchestrating these affairs to bring Daniel and his friends into the limelight. He is working all things together for their good, as well as for His glory. The mighty God will couch the execution of His purpose in a setting designed to give Him glory, and His people confidence. The setting is an angry king – one who rules the world. The circumstance is the decreed death of all the wise men in Babylon’s empire, and Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are among that number. A considerable part of the slaughter has probably already taken place.

However, there is yet more to this situation that will serve to bring honor and glory to God. In the days of Jezebel, who, from any point of view, was far less powerful; than Nebuchadnezzar, Obadiah

hid one hundred prophets in a cave so they would not be exposed to the wrath of the queen (1 Kgs 18:4). The mighty prophet Elijah himself fled from Jezebel to a place where she could not find him (1 Kgs 19:3). When Saul sought David “every day,” David hid in the strongholds of the wilderness (1 Sam 23:14). When Abimelech, a son of Gideon, hired “vain and light persons,” murdering seventy sons of Jerubbaal, the youngest son “hid himself,” and was thus spared (Judges 9:5). On one occasion, when the people “took up stones” to cast at Jesus, He “hid Himself, slipping away from the Temple grounds” NIV (John 8:59). Moses “fled” from Egypt because of the challenge of one of his own brethren (Acts 7:29). In Iconium, when the city became divided over the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, they “fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about” (Acts 14:6). One might suppose, therefore, that Daniel and his friends would hide themselves during the carrying out of the king’s commission. After all, there was certainly Scriptural precedence for such a response.

However, the Kingdom of God is not managed by rules and procedures. What is good under one circumstance, may not be good under another. It may be proper to hide on one occasion, while it would wholly improper to do so on another. The “just shall live by faith” (Heb 10:38), not by lifeless regulations. Another kind of purpose is being served in Daniel’s day, and thus a different manner of response is required. When it is proper to hide, it will require faith to do so. When it is proper to allow yourself to be found, it will also require faith.

It is necessary to make these observations because of the overly simplistic views that are often declared in the name of the Lord. One must remember that adhering to mere rules does not require faith. That was solidly confirmed in the Law, which was the highest form of law. “The Law is NOT,” we are reminded, “of faith” (Gal 3:12).

We will now behold how faith can respond to a threat, and how the Lord will carry out His purpose. You will find it is on an extremely personal level, and with a keen interest to making God’s mind known.

ANSWERING WITH COUNSEL AND WISDOM

“ 14 Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon.” We are not told how long the executioners searched for Daniel. It may not have been long, for there is no evidence that Daniel and his friends were hiding themselves. The point of the text is not that a search was made for Daniel, but how this man of faith would respond when he was found. The God who orchestrated these circumstances will equip His servants to respond properly to them. Like David, their times were in the hand of God, not Nebuchadnezzar (Psa 31:15).

ANSWERING WITH COUNSEL AND WISDOM

“ Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom . . . ” Other versions read “with discretion and discernment ,” NASB “wisdom and tact ,” NIV “prudence and discretion ,” NRSV “wisdom and good sense ,” BBE and “with shrewd and cautious words.” NJB

Even though Daniel was facing a man who had come to take his life, he still maintained composure of both spirit and mind. Danger can cause good sense and wisdom to run from the fearful. But this is not the case with Daniel. This reveals a valuable aspect of faith. It settles the heart and mind, enabling the believer to face a crisis without falling apart or speaking rashly. This is because faith knows WHO is really in control of the circumstances. One cannot shake before men while trusting in “the Mighty God” (Jer 32:18). In Daniel we are NOT beholding a national hero, but a man who believes and trusts in the Living God.

Answering

What was it that Daniel was “answering?” Perhaps the executioner had asked if he was, indeed, Daniel. He might also have given a brief summation of the edict under which he was operating. At any

rate, there was some form of Babylonian protocol that was intended to precede the execution. From a higher vantage point, however, this was a small door of opportunity through which faith could enter, and Daniel seized upon the moment.

We learn from this that there are levels in circumstance. What appears to be only danger can actually contain an opportunity. Scripture puts it this way: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13). Allow me to review this text with God’s promise in mind.

- **TAKEN YOU.** Here is a temptation, or trial, that has taken hold of Daniel. From all appearance, it looks as though he is inferior to it, and is nothing but a victim in its grasp.
- **COMMON.** This circumstance was not unique to Daniel and his friends. It had fallen upon all of the wise men of Babylon.
- **GOD IS FAITHFUL.** The king who had been impressed with the wisdom and understanding of Daniel and his colleagues was not faithful. Now, he had issued an edict against them, instead of for them. Yet, because God was “faithful,” Daniel could stand.
- **NOT SUFFER.** Whether before the Old Covenant, during it, or in the New Covenant, God has always operated in this manner: He has not permitted trials to exceed the ability of His people. I do not know that Daniel was as conversant with this truth as those who are in Christ Jesus. However, his heart was embracing the truth, even though its fulness may not have been grasped by him. This is something that faith knows, even if the mind is not fully aware of it. It is possible to live with the perspective of faith.
- **MAKE A WAY.** Trials pass through the Divine court before they enter the arena of flesh and blood. When they arrive at the door of the believer, they come with a built-in escape hatch. It is one that faith can detect, if not precisely, yet in principle. Faith does not look at the temptation, but looks for the “way to escape.”

WISDOM AND COUNSEL

Daniel’s words are calculated to delay the execution. They must not be hasty words, for “he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly” (Prov 14:29). Solomon once said of a man prone to speak superficially, “Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him” (Prov 29:20). Daniel does not speak to vent fear, but to express faith. His words must be carefully chosen so they will not stir up the flesh, or provoke anger in the executioner standing before him.

Wise and prudent words are spoken with a mind to the effect they will have. Some people speak only to make known their personal preferences. Such words are not always characterized by discretion, for self interests are not a suitable container for discerning speech .

A faithful and wise heart surveys the land, as it were, and speaks in a manner that will not stir up the enemy, or arouse the wild beasts in the land. It is ever true that the tongue can be used to release wrath as well as to calm the waters. As James said, “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell” (James 3:6). Wise and prudent words avoid starting that flaming fire of iniquity. Who is able to measure the heartache, friction, danger, and destruction that have been stimulated, and even fostered, by words?

Daniel now speaks to the circumstance like Jesus spoke to the waters and storm (Mark 4:39). He will still a social tempest with his words.

The Truth Is Being Lived Out

In our text, this very truth is being lived out before us. In Daniel’s case, “the way to escape” was entered by speaking. His life would depend upon his words. If his words are too bulky, and lack substance, he will not be able to get through the “way to escape.” If they are too lean and foolish, they will tend to close the door. His reply must be appropriate!

Therefore Daniel answers with “counsel,” or prudence and discretion. His words are characterized by “wisdom,” or godly tact and taste.

The Wise Woman of the City of Abel

Daniel conducted himself like the “wise woman out of the city” that was being besieged by Joab. As the men with Joab were battering down the wall of that city, this woman cried out, asking Joab to come close so she could speak to him. She told him that it was a long standing practice to ask counsel before wreaking devastation in any city. She said she herself was peaceable, and was “a mother in Israel.” “Why,” she asked, “wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD?” Joab replied he was not simply swallowing up cities. There was a man named Sheba, who had lifted up his hand against king David. He told the woman if she would deliver this man to him, the city would receive no harm. The woman agreed to cast his head over the wall. In her wisdom, she told the citizens of that city what was required to spare the city. As a result, “they cut off the head of Sheba the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab. And he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent” (2 Sam 20:15-22). The deliverance all began with a wise and discreet word.

As Solomon Affirmed

Solomon also spoke of a city being delivered by the words of a poor man who was wise. “This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man

remembered that same poor man” (Eccl 9:13-16).

ARIOCH

“Arioch the captain of the king's guard . . . ” This man was not an emissary of the king, or an envoy of good will. He was “the captain of the king’s guard,” and was come to carry out the orders of the king. He is “the king’s chief executioner,” NSRV As such, he is certainly not noted for sympathy. Nor, indeed, is he noted for reasoning about the circumstances. He was not sent to talk to the wise men of Babylon, but to kill them. He did not come to discuss the edict of the king, but to carry it out.

But there is more to this circumstance than Nebuchadnezzar and Arioch. God is working in this context, and it is His will that is really being carried out. The heart of Nebuchadnezzar “is in the hand of the Lord,” and He will turn it “wherever He wishes” NKJV (Prov 21:1). The heart of Arioch is no different! He also is subject to the King of kings.

If God controls the heart of the king, He certainly will have no trouble with the hearts of those who work for him!

INQUIRING WISELY

“ 15 He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.” Being under the control of the mighty God, Arioch tells Daniel something of the decree under which he is operating. We know from the words that follow that his explanation was brief, for he had no mind to go into the details of his commission. However, he does not shout back, “Who are you to question me? If you are Daniel, you are one of the wise men, and you must die!”

HE ANSWERED

“He answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain . . . ” This is the second time Daniel has spoken – and we are yet at the beginning of the whole episode. Already the wrath of the executioner has subsided, and he is engaged in a conversation with one of the men he has been ordered to kill. This is nothing less than the hand of the Lord! The Lord has joined himself, as it were, to Daniel, and is directing this whole affair through his faithful servant. It is actually Daniel who is in charge, not Arioch.

WHY?

“ . . . Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Daniel continues to speak with wisdom and discretion. He does not use the temporary cessation of Arioch’s mission as a license for folly. His answer suggests the king is not noted for being hasty, ill-tempered, or acting without due reason. Thus, in his

answer, Daniel has not drawn attention to himself, but to the nobility of the ruler under which Arioch operates. In his answer Daniel has not lied. He has not exaggerated the facts. Nor, indeed, has he resorted to superficial reasoning. In his answer, he has allowed for a further response from the king's captain.

The Superiority of Faith

We ought to note the background of this occasion. Suddenly, and without apparent warning, Daniel and his friends are about to be killed. This is an occasion when fear could rise up and dominate the heart – yet it does not. Faith can not only survive sudden and unexpected tests, it can triumph over them.

Not only must Daniel be able to speak wisely, the peace of God must rule his heart. Doubt and fear must be expelled from his heart. Strength must be ministered to his heart and mind. He must be able to think soundly, speak properly, and maintain an unruffled appearance. Arioch must not be aroused to further anger by the demeanor, words, or appearance of Daniel. That certainly is a big order, but faith is fully equal to the challenge. We will see that faith does, in fact, “overcome the world” (1 John 5:4-5). It will be confirmed to our hearts by demonstration as well as affirmation.

Something to be Seen

In this, a valuable insight may be obtained. At this point, God has not revealed all of the circumstances to Daniel. He has been given wisdom and discretion, but not full insight into the circumstance. He does not, however, fold his hands and assume it is not for him to know such things. This is not the way in which faith operates. He will inquire further, trusting that through such means God will open this up to him.

Faith is not humiliated because it has to ask questions. It is not demeaned by obtaining further information from others. Take, for example, the case of the mighty prophet Elisha. He received a double portion of Elijah's spirit, which itself was considerably greater than the portion given to others. On one occasion, Elisha confronted a Shunammite woman who had born a child according to his prophesy (2 Kgs 4:16-17). The promised son had died in the arms of his mother shortly before. This is the woman who had prepared a special lodging for the prophet. When her son died, she took him up to that room, and laid him on the bed she had made for Elisha. She then set out to find the prophet. It is written that she “saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, "Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you” NKJV (2 Kgs 4:24).

As she drew near to Mount Carmel, Elisha saw her afar off, recognizing who it was. He told his servant Gehazi, “Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?” The woman whose son had actually died replied, “It is well.”

After dismounting, the woman ran and took hold of the feet of the prophet. Thinking her conduct was unbecoming, Gehazi stepped forward to “push her away.” It was then that Elisha replied, “Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me ” (2 Kgs 4:27). However, the prophet did not conclude the Lord did not intend for him to know the situation of the woman. Instead, he listened to her explanation (verses 28-31). He had to learn about the situation from her, even though God would empower him to correct it.

A Valuable Lesson

Because of the spiritual degeneration of our times, there are all manner of superfluous reasoning found within the professed church. Some think if a matter is not revealed by God directly to the individual, it is not intended to be known. We have both Elisha and Daniel who will refute such reasoning. Others conclude it is never right to receive required information from others. They imagine God only deals directly with the heart, and never through one mortal communicating with another. Both Elisha and Daniel confirm this is not always the case. Elisha had to learn about the woman’s situation from her. Daniel had to learn about the king’s edict from Arioch.

The fact that we may receive our information from one of our peers, our family, a fellow believer, a doctor, or some other individual, does not mean God will not work in our behalf. It may appear more humbling to have to receive the information from Arioch – especially when you are a person who has been given wisdom, knowledge, and understanding from the God of heaven. However, if that is the case, listen to what Arioch says, and rely upon the Lord to take it from there.

ARIOCH MAKES THE THING KNOWN

“Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.” This is a most marvelous thing! This is a Babylonian speaking with a Jew, whose nation had been conquered by his own. It is an executioner, certainly not noted for holding quiet dialog with those he had been sent to put to death. He is also on a mission from the king, which surely did not allow for such delays. Further, he is certainly under no obligation to provide lengthy explanations about his mission.

In his response, the Lord is using Arioch to enlarge the understanding of Daniel. He is also providing some time in which he can speak to Daniel, and direct him in a “plain path” (Psa 27:11). The steps of Daniel are being directed by God.

Speaking as a man, Arioch no doubt knew the king wanted to know his dream and what it meant. Perhaps the Lord used Daniel to awaken that knowledge within him, thereby constraining him to be considerate of Daniel, and not to simply snuff out his life. All of this, and more, is involved in the Lord working all things together for the good of the four children of Judah.

GIVE ME SOME TIME

“ 16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation.” Once again, the Holy Spirit leaps from pinnacle to pinnacle, showing us the working of the Lord. We are suddenly transported from where Daniel was residing to the court of the king. We learn from this that Daniel’s words were received by Arioch. Again, God is working everything together for the good of Daniel. He is leading the man of God step by step, for that is precisely how faith operates.

DANIEL WENT IN

“Then Daniel went in . . .” Knowing the fierce anger of the king at the time of the edict (2:12), it is remarkable that Arioch allowed Daniel to come before Nebuchadnezzar. People did not simply stroll into the court of the kings in those days. You may remember how cautious Esther was about appearing before the king – and he was her husband, and was not in a state of anger (Esth 4:10-11). Nehemiah was also cautious before the king (Neh 2:1-4).

Daniel did not enter before the king under the umbrella of free speech and inalienable rights! From an earthly perspective, he could very well lose his life. However, that is not the perspective that faith embraces.

Daniel enters the presence of the king more mindful of King of kings than the king of Babylon. He knows the rule of heaven is superior to the governments of this world. He therefore enters confidently into the presence of the inferior ruler of an inferior kingdom. That is the perspective of faith.

It is a principle of sound thought that the circumstances that prevail over the superior also hold true with the inferior. If Daniel can trust God in the presence of earth’s greatest king, and within the world’s greatest government, can you not trust the Lord in your circumstances?

DESIRED OF THE KING

“ . . . and desired of the king . . .” Other versions read , “and asked the king,” NKJV “and requested of the king,” NASB and “and besought the king.” NRSV Daniel was not presumptuous before the king, nor did he come in the confidence of the flesh. The boldness of faith is not the same as the brashness of the flesh. Confidence in God does not equate to carnal arrogance. Faith will give honor to whom honor is due (Rom 13:7), and does not take privilege for granted.

Daniel does not say to the king, “See here, you had no right to decree my death without even

giving me an opportunity to fulfill your demands!" He does not come in the name of personal rights, but humbly bows to the authority of the king, asking for an opportunity, not his "rights."

We ought not to despise the political and social rights that have been vouchsafed to us. They are not usual, and therefore ought not to be taken for granted. However, neither must we allow them to make us demanding and inconsiderate. When the Lord grants us uncommon privileges, we are not to use them as an occasion to be insolent, complaining, or seeking our own ways. There is a certain amount of social unrest that has arisen in our country because the national privileges have been viewed with greater respect than the favor of God Almighty. It is unfortunate that this tendency has even crept into the church. There are far too many people who fall apart if they do not get their own way. In such an atmosphere faith does not function, and flesh is given the ascendancy..

GIVE HIM TIME

" . . . that he would give him time . . ." Daniel asks the king "for time." NIV In so doing, from an earthly point of view, he is actually testing the patience of the king. The wise men who occasioned the edict being carried out by Arioch had, in a sense, asked for time also. They twice asked Nebuchadnezzar to tell them his dream (2:4,7). The king charged them with "trying to gain time" (2:8), and charged them with speaking "lying and corrupt words" (2:9). From the low perspective, Daniel has no reason to believe he will be treated with any more consideration.

Daniel, however, is not thinking of how the king has treated others. He is pondering presenting the cause to the Lord, and obtaining wisdom from Him with whom he really has to do. When flesh asks for time, it is wrong! When faith asks for it, it is right! Blessed is the person who can distinguish between the two.

Note that Daniel asked for himself to be given time, not all four ("Daniel and his fellows"). While all four of the young men had been given "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom," it was Daniel who "had understanding in all visions and dreams" (1:17). He would consort with the others, but in the end, he knew HE was the one who would have to give the answer the king demanded.

It is still true that each person operates within certain Divinely appointed boundaries. God has not called all men to do the same thing, and everyone in the body of Christ does not have an identical ministry. As it is written, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor 12:17-18). There are certain ministries that are to be carried out by certain people – like Daniel interpreting the king's dream, or Paul being the Apostle to the Gentiles. Other brethren may assist them in this ministry, but in the end, they themselves must carry it out. That fact is inherent in this text.

Something to Note

Because of the spiritually impoverished condition of the Western church, it is necessary to explain certain matters. Much of the lack of wisdom and discretion that exist in our time is directly owing to aloofness from God. Even though salvation brings God and men together, many who claim to be “saved” are actually living at a distance from the Lord. The redemption that is in Christ Jesus permits them to come with boldness into His presence, yet they dwell in the outer court. Whatever explanations may be offered for this situation, they are totally unacceptable.

The atmosphere of convenience that is dominating the religious scene is not good. With an abundance of counselors, brief exposure to the things of God, and the deluge of distractions, people are being subtly encouraged to address their problems in indirect ways. If they are unable to hand the matter over to a professional to solve for them, they can always resort to some form of distraction or entertainment to push their problems into the background. The Christian climate of our day does not lead people to sense their need of, and access to, the Living God. Those, however, who are in a condition like Daniel, cannot afford to think in this manner.

There is nothing about salvation that suggests or condones walking in darkness, or apart from the fellowship of the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3; 1 Cor 1:9). Rather, everything about salvation provides for closeness to God. Ponder what the Spirit has said on this matter.

- “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2).
- “For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph 2:18).
- “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of [in] him” (Eph 3:12).
- “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Heb 7:19).
- “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8).
- “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).
- “And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb 10:22).

We do well to remember “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor 5:19). Although sin had put us far off from God, now we are “made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2:13). If

Daniel had recourse to the living God under the Old Covenant, how much more do those in Christ have access to Him under the new and “better covenant” (Heb 8:6).

Distant discipleship is no discipleship at all! Those who dwell at a distance from God, by that very posture, forfeit the benefits that come when men are close to Him.

In our time, aloofness from God is evidenced by an ignorance of the Scriptures, a lack of hunger and thirst for righteousness, and a feeling of at-homeness in the world. As if these conditions were not themselves enough, they are greatly compounded. They are the direct result of the teaching and emphasis of the modern church. Churches are what their doctrines and teachers have made them.

Good trees do NOT produce evil fruit. Wherever defective religion is found, we have a bad tree on our hands. Jesus put it this way. “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit” NIV (Matt 12:33).

The Point

The point is that Daniel was yielding good fruit on a good tree. He had been living by faith, and now his faith was carrying him through a crisis. Had he been living at a distance from the Lord, he would have perished with the rest of the wise men.

We are not protected by an impersonal status, but by our identity with the Lord. That identity is initiated and maintained by faith, and faith cannot be inactive! When James referred to “faith” being “dead,” he was not suggesting that a valid faith can lack life and vitality. Rather, when he said, “faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17), he was saying such was not faith at all, but was spurious, and an imagination. Such pretentious faith is like a body without a spirit. It cannot work because there is no working principle in it. Those who say you can have faith and not have works have contradicted James. His point is that such a thing is not possible. You might as well refer to a corpse as a person as to call something that does not work “faith.”

Because of this circumstance, it is not a theological position that sustains us, but our faith. Being persuaded of the right things is important. Believing and trusting in God is absolutely essential. Those who trust in God take matters of concern to Him. Those who do not trust in Him rely upon their own wisdom and that of other men. Our text shows how faith operates, and those in whose company faith best functions.

Those realities, and more, are being lived out in our text. That is why it ministers to us.

HE WILL SHOW THE KING

“ . . . and that he would show the king the interpretation.” Other versions read, “in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king,” NASB “so that he might interpret the dream for him,” NIV and “and he would tell the king the interpretation.” NRSV Although the text does not say so, Nebuchadnezzar must have recalled Daniel when he came before him. There was nothing in Daniel’s past that would infuriate the king. His righteous life would now lend itself to the favor of the king. We will find that the king will not treat Daniel as an enemy or an imposter. There are at least two reasons for this. First, Daniel had given the king no cause to think he was either. Second, the Lord was in the matter, softening the heart of the king, and making provision for the announcement of a heavenly purpose.

There are two things to be seen in this case. There is an element of certainty associated with both of them. That, of course, is as it should be, for “faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” NIV (Heb 11:1).

First, Time to Know

Daniel was not stalling for time like the wise men before him. He was anticipating meeting with the Lord on the matter. The wise men of Babylon asked for Nebuchadnezzar to help them. Daniel would ask his God for the answer. He wanted time with the Lord, not merely time to think. At this point, thinking would do not good apart from the Lord, for the dream itself was not known, much less the interpretation. This was a time to trust and inquire of the Lord. God had given him knowledge, but NOT all knowledge. He had been granted wisdom, but NOT all wisdom. He could interpret all manner of dreams and visions, but not on his own.

Second, An Answer Would Be Given

The wise men of the empire said they would give an interpretation if only the king would tell them what he dreamed. Daniel asked nothing from the king but a little time, guaranteeing “ he would tell the king the interpretation.” NRSV He did not say he might be able to obtain “the interpretation,” for that would have offered no consolation to the king. Faith enabled Daniel to be certain he would, in fact, receive what the king required.

ONE FURTHER OBSERVATION

An additional observation should be made. Note the apparent confidence with which Daniel made his request. He guarantees that a little time will yield the precise thing the king desires: “in order that he might declare the interpretation.” NASB He does not say that an interpretation could possibly be forthcoming, but that “he would tell the king the interpretation.” NRSV This is the reasoning of faith. The believer knows that required things will be obtained when they are sought from God by faith.

Confidence and assurance are inherent in faith itself. For that reason it is written, “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” NIV (Heb 11:1). Therefore, the words

Daniel spoke were not the expression of a timorous and doubtful soul. He was persuaded that time spent with the God whom He consistently served would yield the required results.

I cannot overemphasize this marvelous benefit of living by faith. When we do not quench and grieve the Spirit of God, we will not be disappointed when we throw ourselves upon the Lord. If we sow to the Spirit, the Spirit will bring a rich harvest to us. That is a guarantee (Gal 6:8). It is not possible to sow to the Spirit and reap a disappointing harvest!

KNOWING WHERE TO GO AND WHO TO TELL

“ 17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions.” Part of being wise and understanding is knowing what to do with time when you receive it. Some people have sufficient time to obtain what they require, yet do nothing with it. They squander time like the prodigal wasted his inheritance. Such people should not be surprised when they remain in spiritual poverty. The things of God can be received instantly, but not apart from the expectation of faith. Answers from heaven do not suddenly descend upon those who walk in the flesh, seeking their own interests above those of their Lord. Although this may seem quite apparent, it is not common knowledge among church members . All manner of professed believers are in a state of consternation because their prayers are apparently unanswered, their circumstances unchanged, and their lives in a state of misery.

Much of this is because they have elected to live at a distance from the Lord. Their Bibles remain closed, they avoid fellowship with godly people, and their affections remain nailed to the earth. What compounds the matter is that contemporary Christianity actually encourages such a posture of life. With its brief and infrequent meetings, frothy praise, and juvenile instruction, it has actually set people up to fall.

I certainly do not mean to harp on such matters, for that is neither wise nor profitable. However, the spiritual climate in which we are living does not encourage such conclusions. That is another reason why the text before us is so important. It is unveiling the manner in which those who trust in God live. Faith moves us to rely upon God – consciously and consistently. The deliverance of Daniel is the consequence of his trust in, and familiarity with, the Living God.

WENT TO HIS HOUSE

Again, only the high points of this account are emphasized. Arioch found Daniel at his house,

brought him to the king, and now he is returning to his house. That means the king has consented to his request. He has given him the time he desired.

In this we again see the marvelous working of the Lord. The king was previously furious, issuing an order to kill all of the wise men in the empire. Now, his heart is softened, and he grants Daniel's request for a little space. God has turned Nebuchadnezzar's heart, moving things into Daniel's favor! The stage is being set for God to unveil the superiority of His Kingdom, and the ultimate demise of all earthly kingdoms. In His maneuvering, he has displayed the impotence of worldly wisdom, and removed all competitors from the stage upon which these things will be revealed.

The text suggests this was not a lengthy period of time, but probably a single day. The secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision – I assume it was the same night. Daniel will thus appear before the king the very next day.

Daniel returns to his own house to make his plea to the Lord. While it is true that God can be accessed from any place, it is also true that special places are often required for special graces . The Lord Jesus "ofttimes resorted" to the garden of Gethsemane for prayer (John 18:1). Other times, when pressed by the crowds, he would depart to a mountain "to pray" (Mark 6:46; John 6:15). Daniel went to his house, a place that was more conducive to supplication than the king's court. I do not doubt that many dear souls fail to obtain answers to critical prayers because they have not, so to speak, entered into their closet.

MADE THE THING KNOWN

" . . . and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions." It is written, "God sets the solitary in families" NKJV (Psa 68:6). Few laborers are called to work alone. That is not the ordinary way in which the Lord is served. There have been occasions when men have been noted for standing alone. They include David against Goliath (1 Sam 17:23-51), Elijah against the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:21-40), and John the Baptist in his introductory ministry (Matt 3:1-6). But these were most extraordinary men and occasions.

David Speaks

David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:14), spoke of the value of spiritual companionship. When speaking of going up to the house of the Lord he said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psa 122:1). Of such companionship he also said, "We took sweet counsel together , and walked unto the house of God in company" (Psa 55:14). When Joseph and Mary made the round-trip to Jerusalem to observe the Passover, they fulfilled this Psalm by traveling "in company" with kindred spirits. On the way home, when missing Jesus, "they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance" (Luke 2:44).

Holy Groups

God has frequently put men together for the accomplishment of His work. Holy couplets include Moses and Aaron (Ex 4:29; 5:1; 6:27), Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:6-38), David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:1; 19:2,7; 2 Sam 21:7), Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:30; 12:25; 13:2,7), and Paul and Silas (Acts 16:19,25,29; 17:4,10). There were also “Peter, James, and John” (Matt 17:1; 26:37).

The Body of Christ

The ultimate fulfillment of sacred grouping is the body of Christ. There comradery reaches its spiritual zenith. It is written, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body ” (1 Cor 12:18-20). The unity of those in Christ Jesus is so profound that individual believers are said to be “members of one another” NKJV (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25).

The Point

Thus, when Daniel goes to his house and reveals the situation to “his fellows,” he is acting in perfect harmony with the manner of the Kingdom of God. This is simply how faith operates, working in harmony with the faith of others.

We must learn from this incident that there is no need to shoulder all our burdens alone. It is true that certain matters must be handled solely by the individual. As it is written, “For every man shall bear his own burden” (Gal 6:5). However, all things do not fall into that category, and we do well to seek wisdom to be discerning about our circumstances.

The Thing Is Made Known

“ . . . and made the thing known.” Other versions read , “and made the decision known,” NKJV “and informed his friends,” NASB “and explained the matter.” NIV

This whole incident began when Arioch found “Daniel and his friends.” Although the text does not say all four were present when Daniel first spoke, it is assumed that they were. Nothing in the text suggests that Daniel was by himself when he presented his plea. He alone went to the king, for it was he alone that would provide the information the king demanded.

Daniel not only had received the “understanding in all visions and dreams,” he knew he had been so blessed. A spiritual gift, or aptitude, is of little value if the one possessing it is ignorant of its presence.

The Propensity to Mystery

There is in the natural man a certain propensity to mystery. Men are often fond of ascribing to God things they do not understand, as though it was the preference of the Almighty to work in obscurity

toward those who trust in Him. It is certainly true that “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing” (Prov 25:2), but not from those who trust in Him. God is honored when His matters are hidden from the “wise and the prudent.” But He is glorified when those very things are “revealed unto babes,” or those who are willing to trust in Him (Matt 11:25; Lk 10:21).

In His dealings with those who believe, God is known more for revealing than concealing, and for making known than for hiding. It was for this reason that David often prayed for understanding: i.e., for God to make known to him secrets that could not otherwise be comprehended (Psa 119:23, 73,125,144,169). Thus we read the following.

- “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17).
- “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:9-10).
- “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 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 3:4-5).
- “Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith” (Rom 16:25-26).
- “Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself” (Eph 1:8-9).
- “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets” (Rom 3:21).
- “But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior” (Tit 1:3).

Although these things are not commonly known among professed believers in Christ, they were sensed by Daniel. He knew God as a Revealer, and thus took matters he could not understand to Him. He did not run to the Babylonian library, or begin searching through their literature on the interpretation of dreams. Even though he had not personally had the dream, and had no idea what the dream was, yet he did know where to inquire. He was not willing to let the matter remain a secret,

particularly since the lives of he and his fellows depended upon him providing a satisfactory and true answer to the kmg.

“The Thing”

Daniel made known “the thing,” or “decision” NKJV of Nebuchadnezzar. That is, he let them know the king had allotted a brief time for Daniel to obtain the needed understanding. If they were going to travail in prayer with him, they needed to know some of the particulars. They certainly could not seek the face of the Lord as though they had a lot of time. Neither, indeed, could they casually approach the Lord as though the matter was not critical. Thus, Daniel revealed the particulars required for a proper quest for understanding.

THE HINDERING EFFECTS OF GENERALITIES

Although this subject must be approached with both caution and wisdom, there are times when being too general becomes a hindrance to the saints. It is not that we are to develop a penchant for all of the gory details. However, neither are we to content ourselves to pray within the fog of ignorance. There are issues so crucial that some details are necessary if we are to pray properly. We must not confine ourselves to generalities. Two examples will suffice to confirm this.

- “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed” (Rom 15:30-32).
- “Finally, brethren, pray for us , that the word of the Lord may have free course , and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men : for all men have not faith” (2 Thess 3:1-2).

When Daniel and his friends besought the Lord, they would not be general in their petition. They had a purpose for praying, and it was not simply to fulfill a mere formality. In a sense, their lives depended on their prayers!

HIS COMPANIONS

And to whom did Daniel make these things known? He certainly did not talk things over with some Babylonians. This was something that was too demanding for members of a heathen empire. The man of God makes this matter known to “Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions .”

These were the people with whom he chose to spend quality time. They were brethren of faith, and were also committed to the Lord. They were also young men to whom the Lord had given

”knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom” (1:17). They were not simply his companions in Babylon, but kindred spirits in the faith. They also perceived the gravity of the situation, and knew what should be done.

The Advantage of Kindred Spirits

We cannot overstate the value of kindred spirits – those of “like precious faith” (2 Pet 1:1). These are people to whom faith has joined us, and among whom God has placed us. They are individuals of whom it is said, “God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16). It is also said of Jesus, “He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb 2:11). When we choose to company with such people, they will be able to more fully assist us in the hour of need. Among men, these are the ones who know and appreciate us best. They are the ones who can most precisely identify the real need. They also are the ones who know how to best respond to it.

Some people, even though they choose to be called “Christian,” speak more with the unregenerate about their troubles than with those who are reconciled to God. Almost without exception, such people are found in constant trouble and frustration. Because they have surrounded themselves with unbelievers, they themselves have a great tendency to unbelief.

The Love of the Brethren

Considerable is said about the love believers have for one another. Jesus not only commanded this love, but said it was a “new commandment.” It is not “new” in the sense of being a new requirement. It is the manner of the love that makes it new. “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). That makes this love profound as well as affectionate, and effective as well as tender. Much is said about this love, and it serves to shed further light on why Daniel made this matter known to three particular individuals, not the everyone in general.

- “ By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples , if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).
- “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you ” (John 15:12). “These things I command you , that ye love one another” (John 15:17).
- “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another ” (1 Thess 4:9).
- “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently ” (1 Pet 1:22).
- “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another ” (1 John

3:11).

- “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14).
- “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer : and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15).
- “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also ” (1 John 4:20-21).
- “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light , and there is none occasion of stumbling in him” (1 John 2:10).
- “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God . He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8).

The strength of these statements is apparent. There is absolutely no room for neglecting to love the people of God. A failure to do so evidences the heart of a murderer, and reveals the person does not know God or walk in the light, regardless of their profession.

What Is the Relevance

It may appear that all of this is nothing more than a diversion from our text. However, this confirms WHY Daniel shared this matter with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were not merely “his companions” in profession, but even more so in the faith. It was their “mutual faith” that bound them together, moving them to join in a common cause. The fact that this could occur several hundred years before the coming of the Messiah confirms how unacceptable it is to fail to have this spirit in our day. The people of God – or those who have chosen to live by faith – have always been attracted to one another. They have always placed a high value on one another, whether they were a band of faithful people in an unfaithful generation like those of Malachi’s day (Mal 3:16-17), or a group of disciples at Troaz coming together to “break bread” and hear Paul (Acts 20:7).

The Words of Jesus

Jesus once promised, “Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt 18:19-20). Meeting together is not merely the fulfillment of an obligation! It is also the opportunity to address serious matters that are too weighty for a single individual.

The principle of love one for another is being lived out in our text. Such love joins the hearts of those possessing it to come before the Lord together, in order to more fully meet each others needs.

THE MERCIES OF GOD, AND WHAT THEY CAN DO

“ 18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” Daniel has a purpose for telling his friends about Nebuchadnezzar’s decision. It was certainly not to merely pass along the information, or to discuss among themselves why such a terrible thing was happening to them.

DEBILITATING INFLUENCES

There are many advantages to living by faith and walking in the Spirit. One of them is being able to respond to crises in a wise, profitable, and God-honoring manner. It is, however, possible to live at such a distance from God that the time of trouble makes you worse instead of better. When the heart is not in fellowship with God, threats and trouble cannot move you closer to Him. Spiritual life is so designed as to not allow one to enjoy Divine benefits apart from intimacy with the Source of those benefits. Many a disappointed soul is only reaping the harvest of walking after the flesh instead of in the faith.

Without belaboring this point, the spiritually perilous times in which we live have allowed professing believers to live in a near-total unconsciousness of the Lord of glory. The truth of the matter is that many see no real need for the Word of God, the grace of God, or the people of God. Such a person is living in practical alienation from God. Like those who do not engage in a quest for the Lord, “God is not in all his thoughts” (Psa 10:5).

Let me be quite clear about this. God is not inclined to run to the aid of those who live apart from Him. When Israel chose to give their hearts to other gods, and to forget the God who delivered them, He refused to hear them in the time of trouble. Thus He said to Jeremiah, “Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble” (Jer 11:14). For some, this is a saying that is too hard – yet it is the truth. No person should expect to be honored by God who refuses to honor Him in their thoughts, desires, and purposes.

Spiritually Dead Environments

Those who choose spiritually dead environments must consider the effects such will have upon their spirits in the hour of crisis. I understand this is a most bitter herb for the soul, but it really must

be ingested. Those who live in spiritual squalor cannot expect to have large bags of spiritual supply handed to them in the time of trouble. If God is not needed to maintain the environment in which we live, we greatly err in thinking our needs will be met by Him at critical times.

Daniel knows how to respond at this unfavorable time because he has been living by faith. God has been at the center of his thinking, thus it is not difficult to resort to Him for immediate help. In the hour of crisis, men will gravitate to the place where they have spent their time and garnered their resources.

DESIRING THE MERCIES OF GOD

There is a most valuable thing to be learned in this passage. Remember, Daniel and his friends have already been given a vastly superior supply of wisdom and knowledge. Under careful examination by the king himself, they have “in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm” (Dan 1:20).

Yet, in this case, Daniel cannot simply draw upon his reservoir of wisdom. In fact, the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of the four young men could not meet the demands of the king. They would have to ask the Lord for more wisdom and precise understanding.

The gifts and graces of God do not come to men to be stored up and kept for some future time. In the case of Daniel and his friends, they did not have a vast supply of wisdom and knowledge in escrow, to be tapped as needed.

The way in which God gives needs to us was pictured in the manna. It came in abundant supply for hundreds of thousands of wilderness sojourners. But they could not store it up in barns – not even in weekly supplies. It came in daily doses that were sufficient to meet their needs. The only exception was on the day before the Sabbath day. Because God forbade them to gather manna on the Sabbath, He gave them a double portion the day before. However, that was the only exception to the rule. When some Israelites tried to keep the manna until the next day, “it bred worms, and stank” (Ex 16:20). What Israel was given was to be used, not stored.

So it was with the wisdom and knowledge that were given to Daniel. It was given when it was needed, and was to be used when it was received. Unlike many of our day, Daniel did not need to be reminded of this. When wisdom was required, he did not go to some notes that he had written, but to the God who granted him wisdom.

Nature Has No Well with Water

Daniel knew it, and we must realize it also: nature has no well with water for the soul, or enduring supplies for the mind. When Adam sinned, the cisterns of both heart and mind were broken, and were no longer capable of holding needed supplies. It is tragic that professed Christians still attempt to draw water from these “broken cisterns” (Jer 2:13). They do well to learn from Daniel to run quickly to the Lord, and urge kindred believers do the same.

Desiring

“That they would desire mercies.” The manner in which Daniel speaks to his companions is most arresting. He does not exhort them to join him in seeking for wisdom and understanding. Instead, he asks them to “desire” something – to let this matter effect their hearts. Other versions read “seek,” NKJV “request,” NASB “plead,” NIV “ask,” Douay “implore,” NAB and “beg.” NJB

The word “desire” includes the idea of fervency in pleading. It is the type of tenacity Jacob had with the heavenly messenger when he said, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (Gen 32:26).

The thought occurs to me how exceedingly difficult it is to simply demand that a person “desire” of “implore” a thing. The very admonition presumes not only an ability to want the right thing, but an appetite for it as well. When Daniel made this request, he knew full well the inclination of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were his “companions,” not in bodily presence only, but in faith and hope as well.

Because these four lived by faith, They were able to quickly acclimate to the spiritual surroundings that had been produced. It took only a word to bring them into productive action.

This is yet another benefit of living by faith. The person who walks in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7), will be able to rally more quickly to godly causes, be “instant in prayer” (Rom 12:12), and is thus “prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim 2:21). Such are “ready always” (1 Pet 3:15).

Mercies

“That they would desire mercies.” And what is it that Daniel admonishes his friends to “desire” of the Lord, plead for, and implore the Lord for with fervency? It is not wisdom! It is not knowledge! It is not an interpretation! Rather, it is “mercies.” Some versions use the word in the singular (“compassion,” NASB and “mercy.” NIV/NRSV). However, the word is plural, and is thus used to “express intensity.” Hebrew Wordbook

From the standpoint of language, “mercies” means pity or compassion. Strong's However, that by no means suggests that only Divine attitude is involved. “Mercies” withhold harmful things from us, and bring good things to us. “Mercies” are a Divine repository of good things. The individual who

receives “mercies” obtains infinitely more than “pity,” as ordinarily perceived. The following texts will serve to confirm this.

- “I am not worthy of the least of all the MERCIES , and of all the truth , which Thou hast showed unto thy servant” (Gen 32:10).
- “Yet thou in thy manifold MERCIES forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to show them light, and the way wherein they should go . Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them , and withheldst not thy manna from their mouth” (Neh 9:19-20).
- “. . . and according to thy manifold MERCIES thou gavest them saviors , who saved them out of the hand of their enemies ” (Neh 9:27).
- “Withhold not thou thy tender MERCIES from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me ” (Psa 40:11).
- “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great MERCIES will I gather thee ” (Isa 54:7).
- “I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD, and the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his MERCIES , and according to the multitude of his lovingkindnesses” (Isa 63:7).
- “And I will show MERCIES unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land” (Jer 42:12).

Mercies provide for those who have need – even though they have nothing of themselves with which to procure that need. In these few texts, we see the provision of Divine direction, tutelage, manna, deliverers, salvation from enemies, preservation, gathering the people together, and great goodness. “Mercies,” therefore, are not merely overlooking conditions that merit Divine wrath. The employment of them is not simply to withhold judgment and condemnation. “Mercies” BRING something of inestimable value to those who seek them. Daniel and his companions are desiring the “mercies” of God to bring wisdom and understanding to Daniel.

“Mercies” Postulate A Fallen Condition

We must not overlook that the very use of the word “mercies” postulates a fallen condition. When Adam sinned, “sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom 5:12). It makes no difference if it is four young men in Babylon, a mass of Israelites enslaved by Egypt, or David lamenting his sin against Uriah the Hittite – “mercies” are a

requirement for all men! There are no sins recorded against Joseph or Daniel, but they needed “mercies.” Only one sin is recorded against Adam and Eve, and they needed “mercies” as well. Wicked Manasseh lived in grievous sins for several decades, and required God’s “mercies.” Still, with all of his transgressions, it was not the number of transgressions he committed that put him in need of “mercies.”

It is man’s nature that requires God’s “mercies,” not merely his conduct. Since man sinned, God must humble Himself to even behold our race. Thus it is written, “Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth” (Psa 113:5-6).

All of this may appear inconsequential, and even demeaning to the sons of men. If that is how men feel, they need to exercise themselves to put down such feelings. If you are going to receive anything from the Lord, it will come because He is merciful – and that in abundance. That is precisely why Daniel told Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to desire “mercies” from the Lord.

“Mercies” Do Not Presume Specific Sin

Lest there be a gross misapplication of this truth, it should be stated that “mercies” do not presume specific sin – like that of David, Manasseh, Peter, or Paul. Daniel and his friends are certainly not being charged with a particular transgression, and that is not why they are desiring “mercies” from God. There are higher plateaus that can only be reached by the mercies of God. One such pinnacle is the presentation of our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. This is said to be done through “the mercies of God” (Rom 12:1).

Holy aspirations, as well as deliverances, are received on the wings of God’s “mercies.” Divine supplies, as well as remission and longsuffering, are obtained through “mercies.” Whether or not these four young men could have delivered an insightful disquisition on this subject, I do not know. But they knew it in their hearts, and sensed it in their spirits. We can do the same, rising to even more lofty heights than they, because we have been raised to sit together with Christ in “heavenly places” (Eph 2:6).

THE GOD OF HEAVEN

“ . . . the God of heaven . . . ” The language here is important. Daniel urges his friends to “to plead for mercy [mercies] from the God of heaven .” NIV While men may tend to take this for granted, it is not taken for granted by the Lord. Much is made of this : “the God of heaven.” It is not a trite religious saying, to be thrown about as though it meant nothing. Consider how the Spirit speaks on this matter.

- Abraham. “And I will make thee swear by the LORD , the God of heaven , and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell” (Gen 24:3). “ The LORD God of heaven , which took me from my father's house, and from

the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence” (Gen 24:7).

- Cyrus. “Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up” (2 Chron 36:23).
- Ezra. “And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up” (Ezra 5:11).
- Nehemiah. “And it came to pass, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven , and said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments” (Neh 1:4-5).
- David. “O give thanks unto the God of heaven : for his mercy endureth for ever” (Psa 136:26).
- Jonah. “And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven , which hath made the sea and the dry land” (Jonah 1:9).

This is not simply a reference to the residence of God, although it does include that. “God IS in heaven” (Eccl 5:2), and Jesus taught us to recognize this in our prayers: “Our Father which ART in heaven” (Matt 6:9).

This is a recognition of a Sovereign God in a superior and dominating realm. Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way that “the heavens do rule” (Dan 4:26). Moses referred to the “heaven of heavens,” saying it belonged to the Lord (Deut 10:14). Even that, Solomon confessed, “cannot contain Him” (2 Chron 2:6). Therefore, we are speaking of much more than location.

David put it this way, “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all” (1 Chron 29:11). Jesus taught us to express it this way, “For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever” (Matt 6:13).

Because God is “in the heavens ,” “He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Psa 115:3). From the heavens, His great power is exercised without hindrance in all domains. As it is written, “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places” (Psa 135:6).

“The God of heaven” is the ruling One, who shouts out to all personalities, “Indeed before the day was, I am He; And there is no one who can deliver out of My hand; I work, and who will reverse it?” NKJV (Isa 43:13). When He purposes a thing, whether it be the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, or the granting of understanding to Daniel, it may be said, “For the LORD Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?” NIV (Isa 14:27).

God has pronounced judgment against all other gods. His pronouncement is plain and to the point. “The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion” (Jer 10:11-12). That is involved in the expression “the God of heaven.”

Another Principle to Be Seen

There is yet another principle to be seen here. There is a certain quality in God that compels Him to reveal what He is going to do to His prophets. Amos puts this into words. “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth His secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). Whether Daniel and his companions knew this cognitively or not, I do not know. But they certainly knew it intuitively, for that is a perception that characterizes faith.

By pleading for “mercies” from the God of heaven, Daniel and his friends are recognizing the power of the Lord, as well as the impotence of men. If God wills to reveal the dream and its meaning to Daniel, there is not a person on earth or diabolical spirit under it that will be able to stop it. That is certainly something to be believed, but it is true, whether it is believed or not. Believing it puts God on your side – WITH all of His power and resources.

A Noble Example for Us All

Indeed, we have in this text a noble example for us all. Without question, God “is above all” (Eph 4:6). He towers above all adversarial personalities, whether the devil himself, or the hierarchy that functions under his delegated leadership. Thus, effectual prayers are offered with God being more in consideration than the circumstance. When we stand in the glory of God, circumstance becomes small.

If you do not presently have a crisis on your hand, it will not be long until you will. As long as you are in the world, you are in a hostile realm – one in which an Omnipotent God is needed. It is good to know that is precisely the kind of God we have, and that He is kindly disposed to us in Christ Jesus.

THE SECRET

“ . . . concerning the secret . . . ” Other versions use the word “mystery.” In Scripture, a “secret,”

or “mystery,” is something that cannot be known independently of God. It is something that is “hidden” by God, and can only be known as He is disposed to make it known.

There are two classes of “secret” things. There are secrets that God is disposed to reveal, and secrets that will not be revealed to men in the earth. Of these Scriptures declare, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever” (Deut 29:29). Praise the Lord, all secrets are not in the first category. In either case, however, if God does not reveal the secret, it cannot be known. No human wisdom can dig it out. No language expert can uncover what Paul heard when he was transported to the “third heaven” (2 Cor 12:2).

Hiding Power

To confirm that what God hides cannot be discovered through human ingenuity, Scripture speaks of the salvation of God as a “secret.” Here is a purpose “which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God ” (Eph 3:9). It was a fully developed purpose, with every facet designed for the glory of God. It included a Lamb “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8), who “was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet 1:20). It even involved a “kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt 25:34). In its entirety, this was “the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints” (Col 1:26).

The Grand Purpose of God

This grand purpose was revealed in an embryonic form before Adam and Eve were thrust from the garden (Gen 3:13). God introduced Abraham to it in the promise of a Seed, through whom the whole world would be blessed (Gen 18:18). By means of the Law, types and shadows of this great redemption were developed in remarkable detail (Col 2:16-17; Heb 8:5; 9:8-10; 10:1). The Prophets also spoke of the heart of this purpose, which involved “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet 1:11).

This secret spanned a period of 4,000 years. During the first 2,500 years, only personal revelations were given, and they were very sparse. At no time was the fulness of Divine purpose made known. Adam and Eve heard of the conquering of the devil. Abraham heard of the blessing of the world. David heard of a king whose throne and kingdom would never end. The prophets were told of a Messiah who would make an end of sin, and bring in ever lasting righteousness. But none of them could decipher the purpose, or put things together. Forty long centuries passed, and the purpose remained a “secret, hidden from the foundation of the world.”

In God’s Word, and in the sense of our text, only God can reveal a “secret.” Daniel and his companions knew this, and therefore they sought “mercies” from the Lord to reveal both the dream and its meaning to Daniel. The Chaldeans proved utterly inadequate to the challenge. For that matter, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, could not provide the answer either. The difference with them was that they knew where to go for the answer. That, of course, is precisely why Daniel will receive

what is needed.

It ought to be noted that faith does know where to go. Faith pushes the one possessing it into the heavenly realms. It brings an awareness of God that makes the things of this world look very small.

SHOULD NOT PERISH

“ . . . that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” You will note that Daniel has now surfaced as the leader among the four. Although all of them had received “knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom,” Daniel had excelled in understanding “all kinds of visions and dreams” (1:17) . Now the four are no longer referred to as “Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah” (1:11), but as “Daniel and his fellows” (2:13,18), or “Daniel . . . and his companions.”

Thus, the spotlight has moved from scene to scene in the delineation of God’s purpose. First it was upon Nebuchadnezzar (1:1-5). Then it was on an diet that he has imposed (1:6-16). Next it is on the examination of the four children of Judah by the king (1:18-20). Next, the spotlight shines upon Nebuchadnezzar again, and the circumstances relating to a dream he cannot remember (2:1-12). Then the attention turns to the four young captives (2:13). Now, however, the light has settled upon Daniel, who will remain in the spotlight, with only the four in the fiery furnace as an exception.

The Cause Is Stated

In order to assist their prayers, the cause is presented in these words, “so that Daniel and his friends might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” NASB This was, then, a very real circumstance. No pretending here! If their prayers are not answered, all four of them will be ripped to pieces, just like “the rest of the wise men of Babylon.” You will have to admit, that does provide a strong incentive for fervent prayer and supplication. Perhaps some prayers are not answered because they are not accompanied with a sense of urgency.

Keep in mind they do not have a lot of time to receive the answer. Yet, they seemed to sense that whatever was about to happen was subject to the will of God, and therefore they set themselves to seek the wisdom that comes alone from Him. They knew if God’s purpose was made known, Nebuchadnezzar’s purpose would fall to the ground. It is still true that the less men know about what God is doing, the more they are subject to what men are doing. When what is above us does not control us, what is around us will.

Did All the Wise Men Perish?

We do not know if all of the wise men were slain as Nebuchadnezzar decreed. Perhaps some of them were spared for the sake of Daniel and his friends. After all, it was the dream and its meaning that he desired above all else. I will not take the luxury of indulging in such speculations, as they really

serve no purpose.

The attention and control has now shifted to Daniel. His gifts and abilities were given to him for this reason, and he like Esther, has come to the kingdom for such a time as this (Esth 4:14). We will now see the effectiveness of faith to receive the answer that is needed, and to speak it out with boldness.

CONCLUSION

Ponder what we would know about this whole incident if we viewed it as a newspaper reporter, without the advantage of Divine commentary.

- Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem.
- Jehoiakim is carried away captive.
- Part of the vessels of the Lord's house are carried away.
- The vessels are placed in the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god.
- The king requires a search for gifted youth among the captives of Judah.
- Four are chosen from Judah.
- A strict diet is imposed upon them.
- At the end of the allotted time, the boys are tested.
- The boys prove superior in their testing.
- Nebuchadnezzar has a dream he cannot remember.
- The wise men of Babylon cannot help him.
- The king decrees the death of the wise men throughout the realm.
- A stay of execution is granted to Daniel and his friends.

That is how everything looked "according to appearance." But there was more to the circumstance than that!

- God had given Judah to Nebuchadnezzar.
- God gave Jehoiakim and part of the vessels from His house to the king.
- God gave the four children of Judah wisdom and understanding.
- God gave Daniel favor in the eyes of the man over them.
- God blessed the boys to be superior through a diet of vegetables and water over all others.
- God gave them wisdom in all intelligence, literature, and learning.
- God caused the boys to be "ten times" better than the wise man of the realm.
- Daniel and his companions were protected from the decree of the king.
- God causes Nebuchadnezzar to give Daniel time the others were refused.

It is the working of the Lord that makes this account unique – not the circumstances in which Daniel and his friends found themselves.

All of this may seem very apparent in the book of Daniel. However, we are seeing a Divine manner that is not confined to Daniel or his times. It is one thing to see how God worked in the life of these young men. It is quite another to perceive how He is working in your own life. We must learn from these things not to judge according to appearance, or put our trust in the flesh and its seeming abilities. When things are difficult, and circumstances seem like a giant weight to our souls, that does not mean God has abandoned us, or is not imminent in the circumstances of our lives themselves.

If God had not told us what was really happening in the first two chapters of Daniel, we would forever have remained in the dark, just like Nebuchadnezzar. But He has revealed His workings with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in order to assure your heart of His involvement with you!

If God was for those boys, Nebuchadnezzar could not be against them. And, if God is for you, who is it that you imagine can be against you? Put your faith in God!

The Prophecy of Daniel

DANIEL EXTOLS THE NAME OF THE LORD

Lesson #7

INTRODUCTION

The circumstances are being orchestrated in order that God may make known His determined purpose. That purpose has a direct bearing upon the kingdoms of this world and their rulers. It also relates to the ministry of comfort and encouragement to succeeding generations of believers. The manner in which this remarkable revelation is given fulfills many objectives, and serves to shed light on a variety of earthly circumstances. This record will:

- Unveil the relative impotence of all earthly power. The most influential and powerful king in the world had to acknowledge he was helpless in this matter.

- Humble earthly dignitaries. The king had to ask help of those over whom he reigned, and who were in his service.
- Encourage hope in those who put their faith in God. Future generations of believers would draw strength from this event.
- Reveal the utter weakness of worldly wisdom. The most astute empire in the world, noted for its wisdom, could find no person within its borders who could unravel the Divine mystery.
- Make known the limitations of demonic wisdom, which issues from the lower and rejected regions. Although the wise men of Babylon consorted with the nether world, the regions of spiritual darkness were impotent to help them in this matter – even though their lives depended on being able to please the king.
- Confirm the destiny of the world, and those in it, are in the hands of the Lord. In clear and concise words, the Lord speaks of what He will do, bringing down the world’s kingdoms with all of their pomp and splendor.
- Substantiate that asking for wisdom normally precedes its conferment. Although the world does not view “asking” as a powerful means of appropriation, it is a fundamental approach to the Living God. The four children of Judah asked, and they received.
- Calmness can be possessed in the midst of great threats. Daniel responds to the king’s edict with the calmness of faith. It is not the person of Daniel that enabled him to do this, but the faith he possessed.
- Being found among a group that has been condemned does not mean those who believe must also perish. The environmental hypothesis of the worldly-wise is not true. There could not have been a more unfavorable environment than that of Daniel. He not only survived in Babylon, but was blessed there.
- God will hear some prayers while He refuses to hear others. Some prayers are inappropriate – such as Jeremiah praying for the good of Israel (Jer 14:11), or a believer praying for someone who has sinned in order to death (1 John 5:16). Daniel not only knew how to pray, but when and what to pray.
- Time can be given to those with faith, while no time is allowed for those without it. When the wise men of Babylon asked for time, they were condemned. When Daniel asked for time, Nebuchadnezzar granted it.

ONLY GOD CAN DO THIS!

Only “the God of heaven” can accomplish so much with His Word and His answers! His Word is

thorough, leaving no aspect of His character neglected. Not one word from God is in any way impotent, irrelevant, or ineffective. This is an aspect of His wisdom: it proliferates into every aspect of life, and serves all generations. Whatever the Lord says blends with everything else He has said. He never speaks in a contradictory or unprofitable manner.

All Scripture Is Profitable

This is one of the reasons why “all Scripture” is profitable. No part of it is written with only a certain society or a specific time in mind. The Word of God is not limited to a certain generation or geographical area. It is a Word that “shall not pass away” (Matt 24:35). It is “settled in heaven” (Psa 119:89), and thus is forever linked with God, not circumstance. It is ever true, “But the word of the Lord endureth for ever” (1 Pet 1:25). It “liveth and abideth forever” (1 Pet 1:23). As Isaiah said, “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa 40:8).

This is precisely why it is such a grievous sin to neglect the Word of God. Those who are content to remain fundamentally ignorant of what the Lord has declared do great harm to themselves. They do not realize that men live “by every word of God” (Lk 4:4). The spirit of man cannot be sustained independently of the Word of God.

Understanding the Word of God

The great secret to understanding the Word of God is not found in the arena of academics. Having a working familiarity with the original language, historical backgrounds, and contextual considerations, do not unlock Divine meanings! Daniel excelled in all of these areas. He possessed “aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand” NIV (Dan 1:4). After being questioned extensively by Nebuchadnezzar, it is said of Daniel and his three companions, “And as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm” (1:20). Their fields of expertise included “the literature and language of the Chaldeans” (1:4b). Yet, all of this academic efficiency yielded not one weightless mote of spiritual understanding!

These circumstances by no means suggest we ought to look on academic excellence with disdain. What it does mean, is that it is of no profit whatsoever when it comes to knowing the mind or purpose of the Lord.

The sons of God must not allow any form of knowledge to dominate their thinking that excludes the Lord, or discourages going to Him for understanding. Obtaining an understanding of the Word and purpose of God cannot be realized independently of the One who spoke and determined them. This is made clear by the following expressions.

- “Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart” (1 Kgs 3:9).

- “For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous” (Prov 2:5-6).
- “Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law” (Psa 119:34).
- “Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments ” (Psa 119:73).
- “I am Thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies” (Psa 119:125).
- “The righteousness of Thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live” (Psa 119:144).
- “Let my cry come near before Thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to Thy word” (Psa 119:169).
- “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Tim 2:7).
- “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5).

THE POINT

The point to be seen is that Daniel and his companions conducted themselves in a godly manner. This is what faith compels the individual to do – to seek answers from the Lord when they are not otherwise apparent. This does not mean nothing can be known without particularly seeking an answer from the Lord. It is possible to be among those who, “who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:14). A working acquaintance with the Word of God will also yield a certain understanding that will constrain the believer to “hate every false way” (Psa 119:103).

However, as we live by faith, it is inevitable that circumstances and challenges will arise that extend beyond the wisdom and knowledge we possess. That does not mean such things are not to be known, although that is a distinct possibility. The believing soul takes up such issues with the Lord, seeking appropriate wisdom and understanding from the Fountain of all wisdom and knowledge. Such pursuits bring great glory to the Lord.

THE SECRET IS REVEALED

“ 19a Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.” All four men prayed, but only one received the answer! Daniel is the one who had been given the ability to interpret dreams and visions (1:17), but he was helped along in this ability by the prayers of his brethren.

When one is given an ability from the Lord, that ability requires (1) the help of the Lord Himself, and (2) the support of the people of God. God has placed no one in the body of Christ to stand alone. Thus Paul urged believers,

- “Strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Rom 15:30). And again, “for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you” (Phile 1:22).
- “Praying for . . . me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel” (Eph 6:18-19).
- “Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thess 5:25).
- “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith” (2 Thess 3:1).
- “Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly” (Heb 13:18).
- “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Eph 6:18-20).

AGREEING IN PRAYER

I am persuaded that many noble aspirations come short of fulfillment because they are never shared with men and women of prayer. Jesus has promised, “Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.” (Matt 18:19).

Some may conclude Christ’s words applied only to the Apostles. It is true, this chapter was spoken to Christ’s “disciples” (verse 18:1). The word “disciples,” unless preceded by “the twelve” (Matt 10:1; 11:1; 20:17; 9:1), is not always confined to the twelve. The sermon on the mount was spoken to Christ’s “disciples” (Matt 5:1). On another occasion, when Jesus was speaking to a house filled with

“people,” He referred to them as His “disciples” (Matt 12:46,49). John 6:66 mentions an occasion when “many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.” The word “disciples,” therefore, is not always restricted to the twelve.

Further, the explanation for the promise was not confined to the Apostles: “ For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst” (verse 20). He did not say “Where two or three of you are gathered,” but “where two or three are gathered together in My name.” This is a principle that is operative wherever faith moves people to gather together, agree, and pray.

Besides this, if these verses are applicable only to the Apostles, what must be said of the rest of the chapter? Are these words not applicable to all who follow Jesus?

- “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (verse 4).
- “And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me” (verse 5).
- “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (verse 6).
- “Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire” (verses 8-9).
- “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (verse 10).
- “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican” (verses 15-17).
- “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (verse 35).

One might counter that verse 18 surely was limited to the Apostles: “Verily I say unto you,

Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” However, I am not sure that postulate can be supported. This was our Lord’s elaboration on treating an unrepentant offender as a heathen and a publican. It is as though He said heaven would honor their obedience to His word.

LIVED OUT IN OUR TEXT

Of course, these brief explanations are confirmed by the very circumstance of our text. Here were four young men who agreed on a matter – to desire mercies from the Lord. God honored their prayer, thus substantiating the principle further expounded by our Lord. Here is an area the contemporary church would do well to explore and enter into more fully.

THE SECRET WAS REVEALED

“ . . . the secret was revealed to Daniel.” NKJV Other versions read “the mystery was revealed to Daniel.” NASB/NIV Both Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and the meaning of it had been hidden, and none could make them known but God Himself. Both originated with the Lord, and only through Him could they be understood.

A Cardinal Principle

This is a cardinal principle in matters pertaining to life and godliness. What God has given requires God to comprehend. I understand this is a matter hotly disputed in the Christian community. Some argue that once a thing has been generally revealed, as in the Scripture, it only requires attentiveness on the part of man, together with the employment of natural capacities, to understand what has been revealed. This view is defended with aggressiveness, even to the point of mocking those who insist Divine influence is required to comprehend what has been revealed. This view, however, cannot be successfully defended. A cursory consideration of Kingdom realities will serve to confirm this is the case.

- The Son of God was revealed in His conception (Lk 1:35; Matt 1:20-21), to Elizabeth (Lk 1:43), in His birth (Lk 2:11), His dedication (Lk 2:30,38), His young life (Lk 2:49), His baptism (Matt 3:17), by His own words (John 6:38; 6:38 8:23; 10:36), and His prodigious ministry (John 2:11). Yet, when Peter confessed Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus said the Father had revealed it to Him (Matt 16:16-17).
- The holy Prophets were given revelations concerning the “sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” For those with understanding, they seem to be quite clear. Yet, the very ones to whom the revelations were given were told it was not for them to understand them (1 Pet 1:11-12).
- The Gospel of Christ has been revealed prophetically, in the Person of Christ, and through inspired writers. This Gospel is preached to men “with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.” Yet, as

evident as that Gospel may appear to those in Christ Jesus, the holy angels, who are “greater in power and might” (2 Pet 2:11) cannot comprehend it. To this very day, they “long to look into these things” (1 Pet 1:12). If any could know on their own, it would be angels.

- Jesus said things God has made known, He has also deliberately “hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes” (Lk 10:21).
- On the day of Pentecost, Peter boldly announced the salvation of God was for the Gentiles, “those who are afar off” (Acts 2:39). Yet, over ten years later, God gave Peter a special vision and special words that enabled him to understand the truth of what he had himself said under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:1-16).

Settle it in your mind, there is not a single facet of salvation, including the understanding of Scripture, that can be accomplished independently of the Lord. Were such a thing possible, man would have whereof to glory. It is most unfortunate that this erroneous line of reasoning has become so prominent in the Christian academic community. The fruit of such a misconception is testimony enough that it is wholly fallacious and without value.

Even More Evident In Daniel

In the case of Daniel, this truth becomes even more evident. He has been given “understanding in all visions and dreams” (1:17). The ability was not a natural one, but was given to him by God. His thinking and perceptive processes had been endowed with supernatural abilities, far above that of even extraordinary men. Yet, Daniel had to get both the dream and its interpretation from the Lord. If one argues that this case was different because the dream itself was not known, I affirm that makes no difference. Later, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that he DID remember. When he told the dream to Daniel, the prophet was “greatly perplexed,” NIV until the Lord made the matter known to him (4:5-19). Later, Daniel himself had a vision of profound implications. The vision greatly troubled him because he did not understand it – even though God had given him “understanding in all dreams and visions.” It was not until he “asked,” that through a heavenly being the understanding was given to him (7:2-16).

This is why our text refers to the dream and its interpretation as a “secret,” or “mystery.” God had already given it. It was given to a man who, though a heathen, was noted for astuteness of thought. Yet the king could not remember the dream, much less comprehend what it meant.

Daniel was not dealing with something that was simply difficult to understand, requiring extensive calculations and contemplations. He did not waste his time trying to conjure up what the dream might have been. Instead, together with his companions, he prayed. As a result of their prayers, God pulled back the curtain of obscurity showing Daniel what was otherwise locked in Divine secrecy.

Was given to know. Daniel was “given” to know both the dream and its meaning – a dream he had not even had. Both his knowledge and his understanding were gifts from God. Here, then, is an early example of how a person can be “given to know” things relating to Divine intent and revelation (Mark 4:11). This knowledge was apart from books, study, or other natural forms of the communication

of knowledge.

Became clear through faith. From another vantage point, the faith of the young men was the vehicle through which Daniel received his knowledge and understanding. God works through appointed means. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah approached the Lord in faith, and thus were well pleasing to Him. It is, after all, “by faith” that we “understand” (Heb 11:3).

Confidence. There is also the element of confidence. These young men were not stabbing in the dark in their prayers. Daniel had already told the king he would tell him both the dream and its interpretation when he returned (2:16). The faith these young men had kept and nurtured enabled them to be confident in the hour of trial. This is an example of “the full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22).

God can bear witness with the human spirit. This is a sterling example of how the Lord communicates with the human spirit. This communication defies human explanation, but should not surprise us. An even higher example of this is experienced by those who are in Christ Jesus. It is said of them, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom 8:16). That witness also involves both knowledge and understanding.

It is these remarkable spiritual parallels that gives our text edifying power. This is precisely why “all Scripture” is “profitable” (2 Tim 3:16). The profit, or benefit, derived from historical incidents like that of Daniel is not found in the mere acquisition of knowledge. Rather, in these incidents the realities that are embraced by faith are lived out, confirming to our hearts their effectiveness.

IN A NIGHT VISION

“ . . . the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision.” NKJV A “night vision” is not a special category of visions, but simply refers to the time during which the revelation was given - “during the night.” NIV

By calling the revelation a “vision,” the text does not mean Daniel only saw something. The extent of his knowledge will confirm there was some form of verbal communication or writing. For example, the Lord “spoke” to Paul “in the night by a vision” (Acts 18:9). God has declared He can “speak” to men in a dream (Num 12:6). When Habakkuk received a vision from the Lord, He was told, “Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Hab 2:2). When the Lord called Ananias to set Saul of Tarsus apart to the Apostleship, He spoke to Him in a “vision” (Acts 9:10). When, therefore, we think of “visions,” they should always be associated with a message – with making something known.

Sometime during the night hours, when natural capacities are generally at their lowest level, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its meaning were made known to Daniel. There was no guessing about

what had happened. Faith brings a unique confidence that removes all doubt, assuredly convincing the heart and mind. This is a most remarkable thing. To know something is one thing. To be able to explain it is something else. Both facets of knowledge had been given to Daniel.

The revelation came to Daniel alone, even though his companions prayed with him. Having prevailed in prayer, the answer was graciously given. Initially, their prayer was lifted up “so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon” (verse 18). The answer, however, will go far beyond the mere sparing of their lives. There will be a higher purpose served than the protection of these four godly young men. They were protected because they were in the heart of God’s will, living by faith, refusing to be conformed to the world, and seeking to understand what God had given. God has a message to give that will impact human history. It will unveil the beneficent reign of the Lord Jesus Christ. It will confirm the demise of the most powerful kingdoms in all of history – to say nothing of lesser ones.

The Lord has often given insights to His children during the night. Ancient Job spoke of God speaking to His people “in a vision of the night” (Job 33:14-15). Eliaphaz the Temanite spoke of something “secretly brought” to him in “thoughts from the visions of the night” (Job 4:13-14). The Lord spoke to Jacob in “visions of the night” (Gen 46:2). Daniel himself had other visions in the night (Dan 7:2,7,13). Paul also had visions “in the night” (Acts 16:9; 18:9). David confessed the Lord had instructed him “in the night seasons” (Psa 16:7), and “visited” him “in the night” (Psa 17:3). When, therefore, worldly activities subside, God can speak effectively to His people, opening hidden matters to them. Such is occurring in our text.

I assume that the “night” during which the “secret” was revealed to Daniel was the very one following their immediate petition for understanding. That would make it the night after Daniel appeared before Nebuchadnezzar, receiving some allotted time to obtain what the king required.

Not All Answers Are Instant

Not all answers are received so quickly. Later, while waiting for understanding, Daniel “was sick for days,” astonished by a vision he had received (8:27). Still later, he patiently waited for three full weeks before receiving an answer from the Lord (10:2). Strong faith does not necessary bring immediate answers! Some prayers must be importunate, with the petitioner continuing to ask without fainting. In such cases, God is said to “bear long” with the petitioners (Lk 18:7), patiently waiting to answer them.

However, this is not such a case. The circumstance did not allow for a lot of time. Thus faith, adapting to the situation, earnestly sought, and effectively received, a life-saving and revealing answer.

HE BLESSED THE GOD OF HEAVEN

“ 19b Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.” Other versions read, “Then Daniel praised the God of heaven,” NIV/NIB and “And Daniel gave blessing to the God of heaven.” BBE

Faith's Priority

Notice the priority embraced by the man of God. It is a precedency driven by faith. He does not run quickly to Nebuchadnezzar to give the answer the king so earnestly sought. Rather, he first turns his attention to the God who had heard their prayer and revealed the secret. As Anna, a prophetess who would appear many centuries later, Daniel was “instant” to give “thanks” (Lk 2:38). One of the sure evidences of living by faith is being able to quickly give thanks for answered prayer. Such individuals are NOT “slow of heart to believe” (Lk 24:25).

The Word “Bless”

The word “bless” does not come from the same root word as “praise.” Later in Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar will say, “I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored Him that liveth for ever” (4:34). Two different English words are used (“blessed” and “praised,” and they are translated from two different Hebrew words (“blessed” = **ברך** [berak – the same word used in our text], and “praised” = **שבח** [shebach]).

There is a twofold meaning to the word “bless.” One has to do with physical posture: to kneel . The other has to do with utterance : an act of thanksgiving to God for His mercies . McClintok and Strong

The Scriptures frequently speak of men thus blessing God.

Before the Law

- Noah. The first words attributed to Noah are these: “Blessed be the LORD God of Shem” (Gen 9:26).
- Melchizedek. “And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine (Abraham’s) enemies into thy hand” (Gen 14:20).
- Eliezer, Abraham’s servant. “And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son” (Gen 24:27,48).
- Jethro. “Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the

hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians” (Ex 18:10).

During the Law

- Ahimaaz. “Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king” (2 Sam 18:26).
- David. “Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever” (1 Chron 29:10).
- Jehosaphat and the people. “And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD : therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day” (2 Chron 20:26).
- Hezekiah and the princes. “And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD , and his people Israel” (2 Chron 31:8).
- Ezra. “And Ezra blessed the LORD , the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground” (Neh 8:6).
- Zechariah , father of John the Baptist blessed the Lord. “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people” (Lk 1:68).

After the Law

- Peter also blessed the Lord. “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pe 1:3).
- Paul broke forth in blessing God in First Corinthians 1:3. “ Blessed be God , even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort.” Ephesians 1:3. “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ , who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

There are also frequent exhortations to “bless the Lord” (Neh 9:5; Psa 103:22; 134:2; 135:19,20). Scripture also contains self-exhortations to bless the Lord: i.e., “Bless the Lord, O my soul” (Psa 103:1,2; 104:1).

In all of these cases, thanksgiving is being offered – thanksgiving that has been prompted by the perception of faith.

BLESSING GOD

The spiritual sensitivity of Daniel is revealed in his quick blessing of God. He knows he can now describe Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and give the interpretation of it as well. There is no question about why he is able to do this. It is because “the God of heaven” has made these things known to him, and he knows it.

Thus he blesses God, not in the sense of adding any advantage to the Lord, but by quickly giving insightful thanks to Him.

WISDOM AND MIGHT ARE HIS

“ 20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His . . . ”

DANIEL ANSWERED

In Scripture, the word “answered” often means the person is responding to a circumstance, as well as responding to an interrogation. In this text, “answered” refers to Daniels response to the revelation that has been given to him. We can answer, or respond, to a blessing, to the grace that has been extended to us, to Divinely orchestrated opportunities, and to circumstances.

- Jesus answered a work of God. After Jesus had denounced Chorazin and Capernaum, perceiving God had hidden the truth from them, He “answered” the working of His Father by thanking Him He had hidden these things from the wise and the prudent (Matt 11:21-26).
- Jesus answers a situation. On another occasion, Jesus “answered” a situation by speaking to the people in parables (Matt 22:1).
- Jesus answered the disciples thoughts. Matthew records Jesus answering the thoughts of His disciples, without them ever saying a word (Luke 5:22).

Daniel is answering, or responding to, the Lord's merciful revelation of a secret that could not otherwise be known. He provides some insight into how faith reacts to Divine interpositions.

BLESSED BE THE NAME OF GOD

“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever . . .” Other versions read “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,” NASB “Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever,” NIV “Blessed be the name of God from age to age,” NRSV “May the name of God be blessed from everlasting and to everlasting.” Septuagint

At once Daniel's thoughts turn fully to the living God. His first thoughts are not concerning his own safety, or the deliverance of himself and his companions from death. His thoughts do not turn to standing before the king of Babylon, or to being able to clearly articulate what God has shown to him. Rather, he is as quick to glorify the Lord as to petition Him – a rare quality, indeed.

“The Name”

The phrase “the name of God” refers to the part of Himself that He has revealed. It is another way of saying “what is known about Him.” From still another point of view, “the name of God” speaks of His Person – who He really is. This expression is not referring to a Divine title or appellation, like “Jehovah” (Ex 6:3) or “Jah” (Psa 68:4). Ponder how the “name” of the Lord is used.

- “For the LORD, whose name is Jealous , is a jealous God” (Ex 34:14).
- “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ” (Isa 57:15).
- “Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know Mine hand and My might; and they shall know that My name is The LORD ” (Jer 16:21).
- “As I live, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts ” (Jer 46:18).
- “Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is The God of hosts ” (Amos 5:27).

In this sense, the name of the Lord is His Person – who He is, and the qualities He bears. This is made known by revelation, not human deduction.

The Experience of Moses

When Moses asked God to show him His glory, the Lord said He would “proclaim the name of the Lord” to Moses. He would put Moses in a cleft of a rock that was by Him, and pass before His servant, proclaiming His name (Ex 33:19). The record of that proclamation is worthy of much consideration. God did not declare a title by which He was called, but revealed who He Himself was. “And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD . And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed , The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (Ex 34:5-7).

The Lord, in fact, made His Person known to Moses, giving Him an understanding of His ways.

Now Daniel blesses “the name of the Lord,” extolling Him for making Himself known to Daniel. We will see in the interpretation of the dream that Daniel was shown what God was going to do. What Daniel received was infinitely more than the meaning of a dream, although that was included. He was given to see something of the Lord Himself. That is precisely why He speaks in the following manner.

FOR EVER AND EVER

“Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever.” Other versions read “from age to age,” NRSV “from eternity and for evermore,” DOUAY and “from everlasting and to everlasting.” Septuagint The phrase “for ever and ever” is used at least forty-six times in Scripture (Ex 15:18; 1 Chron 16:36; 29:10; Neh 9:5; Psa 9:5; 10:16; 21:4; 45:6,17; 48:14; 52:8; 111:8; 119:44; 145:1,2,21; 148:6; Isa 30:8; 34:10; Jer 7:7; 25:5; Dan 2:20; 7:18; 12:3; Mic 4:5). This provides a perspective for faith.

This is an expression that pushes our thoughts beyond the constraints of time. It declares there is no time or future in which the Lord will not be Sovereign and duly honored. His judgments cannot be voided or interrupted. His will cannot be dashed to the ground by those who are created.

At some point, those who would live by faith must think beyond time and circumstance. Their thoughts must be within the framework of “for ever and ever.” It is not possible to bless God acceptably apart from this perspective. Daniel now makes the association of God with eternity, and with Divine qualities that have neither beginning nor ending.

WISDOM IS HIS

“ . . . for wisdom . . . [is] His.” The ONLY reservoir of valid wisdom resides with God. There is, of course, a wisdom that “does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic” NKJV (James 3:15). By saying it is “earthly,” the Spirit means it proceeds from the world, and is temporal in nature.

Such knowledge is “sensual,” or rooted in the natural senses and appealing to man’s lower nature. It is “demonic” because it is promoted by the forces of evil – “the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12). This is the kind of wisdom Babylon’s wise men possessed, and it proved to be their undoing.

True “wisdom” is ascribed to God Himself. He is the fountain, or source, of wisdom. “Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 7:12). His is a “manifold wisdom,” with various facets that are employed to fulfill His will (Eph 3:10). In particular, God’s wisdom involves knowing all things, determining what will best bring honor and glory to Himself, and making determinations that do not violate His character or contradict His purpose.

The reason Daniel ascribes wisdom to the Lord is because He has received wisdom from Him. How frequently God has revealed Himself as imparting wisdom. This is His manner.

- Joseph was given wisdom (Acts 7:10).
- God filled Bezaleel with wisdom (Ex 31:3; 35:31).
- God put wisdom in the heart of Aholiab and his coworkers (Ex 31:6; 35:35).
- God gave Solomon wisdom (1 Kings 4:29; 2 Chron 9:23).
- Ezra received wisdom from God (Ezra 7:25).
- Such wisdom is not reserved for only a select few of God’s people, but is for all who are in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:17; Col 1:9; 2:3).

Daniel has asked for wisdom, as we are told to do (James 1:5), and has received it. Now He acknowledges its Source, confessing it has come from God.

It is important to note that this wisdom cannot be acquired from any other source. That is precisely why Daniel confesses “wisdom” is “HIS.” The glory of the matter is found in the Lord’s willingness to impart this wisdom to those who, like Daniel, walk by faith.

MIGHT IS HIS

“ . . . for . . . might [is] His.” What a rare thing it is to behold the amalgamation of wisdom and might. Among men, these qualities are rarely joined. In God, they are ALWAYS found together. Thus we twice read of “wisdom and might” (Dan 2:20,23). Twice we read of “wisdom and strength” (Job 12:13; Rev 5:12). Twice “wisdom” is joined with “power” (Jer 10:12; 51:15). “Wisdom” relates to developing a

purpose. “Might” relates to carrying out that purpose.

Fifty-seven times God is referred to as “Almighty” (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25; Ex 6:3; Num 24:4,16; Ruth 1:20,21; Job 5:17; 6:4,14; 8:3,5; 11:7; 13:3; 215:25; 21:15,20; 22:3,17,23,25,26; 23:16; 24:1; 27:2,10,11,13; 29:5; 31:2,35; 33:4; 34:10,12; 35:13; 37:23; 40:2; Psa 68:14; 91:1; Isa 13:6; Ezek 1:24; 10:5; Joel 1:15; 2 Cor 6:18; Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:15; 21:22). It is clear that from the beginning, God has desired to be known as a mighty God. With Him all things are possible (Mark 10:27), and nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37).

Faced with something utterly impossible with men, Daniel and his companions go to the Lord for wisdom. They sensed the truth of something that would be declared with greater clarity in succeeding generations: “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

One Further Observation

By acknowledging that both wisdom and might have their source in God, Daniel is also admitting it requires Divine power to get Divine wisdom into the hearts of His people. This fact will be further amplified in the tenth chapter.

I cannot help but note how Daniel excels in insight and thanksgiving. Although those in Christ Jesus have received much more than Daniel, they too often come far behind him in the matter of blessing God. This is an area in which, by the grace of God, considerable improvement can be realized. Godly assemblies should have much of this.

Let the people of God view circumstances that confirm the poverty of human wisdom and might as occasions to seek those indispensable virtues from the Lord of glory. When it becomes evident we are powerless, God will go to work.

HE CHANGES TIMES AND SEASONS

“ 21a And He changeth the times and the seasons . . . ” Most versions read exactly the same: “He changes the times and the seasons.” Some variant versions read, “who changes the times and the epochs,” NASB “He changeth times and ages,” DOUAY “By him times and years are changed,” BBE “He is changing times and seasons,” YLT “He determines the course of world events,” NLT and “It is he who controls the procession of times and seasons.” NJB

Jesus to His Disciples

Jesus spoke of “the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power” (Acts 1:7), declaring it was intended that men should not know such things. By this, two things were intended. First , there are times and seasons God has determined that are not revealed to men. Second , no Divinely appointed times and seasons can be known by men unless they are revealed.

When Jesus’ disciples asked Him, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” , He replied this was something that was not given to them to know. There were, indeed, “times and dates” that God has “set by His own authority.” NIV The ones pertaining to the restoration of Israel, however, were not for them to know.

Paul to the Thessalonians

Another circumstance was introduced to the Thessalonian brethren. Unlike the times and seasons the disciples were not intended to know, Paul spoke of some that could be known. “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (1 Thess 5:1-2). While every aspect of our Lord’s return has not been revealed, some things have. Paul confirmed it would take place in a time and season when unregenerate men least expected it.

God’s Revelation to Daniel

The second chapter of Daniel confirms that God has revealed o Daniel a matter involving times and seasons. Unlike men, God does not merely diagnose the times. He changes them!

CHANGETH

The word “changeth” has to do with Divine intervention. Although God Himself does not “change” (Mal 3:6) , He is engaged in the work of changing.

- God will “change” the entire natural order. “Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou CHANGE them, and they shall be CHANGED ” (Psa 102:25-26).
- God sent an angel and “changed” the edict of Nebuchadnezzar, who decreed the death of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. “Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have CHANGED the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God” (Dan 3:28).

- God “changed” the heart of Nebuchadnezzar to that of a beast. “Let his heart be CHANGED from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him: and let seven times pass over him” (Dan 4:16).
- God will “change” the bodies of all men. “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be CHANGED , in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be CHANGED . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:51-53).
- In salvation, God, through His Holy Spirit, “changes” the saved from one stage of glory to another. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are CHANGED into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor 3:18).
- God “changed” the priesthood that He Himself ordained. “For the priesthood being c CHANGED , there is made of necessity a CHANGE also of the law” (Heb 7:12).
- God can “change” the glory of people into shame. “As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I CHANGE their glory into shame” (Hosea 4:7).
- Faith and hope confirm to the heart that God will “change” the very bodies that presently cause us great difficulty. “Who shall CHANGE our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself” (Phil 3:21).

The Word of God is filled with examples of Divine change – when He intruded into the affairs of men and altered what occurred among them.

- He changed the location and status of humanity when Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden.
- He changed the career of Cain.
- He changed the populus and appearance of the world in the flood.
- He changed the building plans of the people in the plain of Shinar, dispersing them through the world in a state of confusion.
- He changed the presence of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- He changed the enslaved condition of Israel, delivering them from Egypt.

- He changed the natural flow of the Red Sea and the Jordan River, allowing His people to cross through them on dry ground.
- He changed the status of Joseph, elevating him to the throne of Egypt.
- He changed the status and appearance of Jerusalem in the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar, and later when the Roman armies brought it down to the ground.
- In redemption God has changed our hearts, our minds, our desires, and our status.
- In the New Covenant the Lord changes both the times and the seasons, opening the prison created by sin, and raising up a highway to glory. He gives mercy to those who formerly did not obtain it, and writes their name in the book of life. Salvation is all about change.

TIMES

“ . . . He changeth the times.” God changes times, so that opportunities can be granted that were once withheld. The word “times” refers to set, or designated, times. The idea is that when God’s appointed time arrives, the times are changed, or altered, to suit His appointed purpose. God declares this aspect of His character. “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me,

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure” (Isa 46:9-10). That involves changing the times.

The Prophets, for example, were not given to understand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow – yet those in Christ Do understand them (1 Pet 1:11). The TIMES have been changed!

The Gentiles, who were not a people, have now become the people of God (1 Pet 2:10), and those who were afar have been made nigh Eph 2:13. The TIMES have changed.

Divine mysteries that have been hidden from the foundation of the world have now been revealed to the saints (Col 1:26). The TIMES have changed.

In speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dominance of the Gentiles over it, Jesus declared the situation would change when “the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk 21:24). Paul affirmed the role of the Jews would change when “the full number of the Gentiles has come in” NIV (Rom 11:25). God changes times!

God appointed, or “set,” a time when barren Sarah would have a son – the child of promise (Gen 17:21). When that time arrives, the time of Sarah’s barrenness ended and she “conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him” Gen 21:2). God changed the times.

In the revelation given to Daniel, he was told the time of Babylon’s glory would change. The pomp and splendor of Nebuchadnezzar would change. Empires that ruled the world would change. These things would not happen by human ingenuity, but by the God of heaven. He would change the times according to His own good pleasure. It is ever true, God “doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Dan 4:35).

SEASONS

“ . . . He changeth . . . the seasons.” The word “seasons” has to do with epochs, ages, or periods. “Times” have to do with WHEN those periods begin, or the initial change takes place. “Seasons” have to do with the whole period itself.

For example, under Christ Jesus we have a new season. It is referred to as “the day of salvation,” “the accepted time” (2 Cor 6:2), and “the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4:19). It is also called “times of refreshing” (Acts 3:19). This is the appointed time to come to God through Jesus Christ, obtain the remission of sins, and realize the imputation of the righteousness of God.

In the revelation given to him, Daniel was told of the termination of Babylon’s “season” of glory. The “season” of world empires would be brought to halt, and God’s everlasting kingdom would fill all the earth.

DIVINE DESTINY

Behind the changing of both times and seasons, there is a Divine purpose. All valid change is driven by a Divine agenda. What God works is “according to His will” (Dan 4:35), and is driven by His “eternal purpose” (Eph 3:11). The summation of that purpose is exceedingly large, and is stated in these words: “Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him” (Eph 1:9-10). It is difficult, if not impossible, for the honest and good heart to miss the obvious emphasis upon Deity.

Our text blends with the purpose that has been most fully revealed in Christ Jesus. In the demise of worldly empires, God is not merely responding to their ungodliness, ruthless rule, or spiritual obtuseness. Rather, He is preparing the world for the everlasting kingdom of His Son, and our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. He is setting the stage for the exacting fulfillment of His own immutable

purpose.

HE REMOVES AND SETS UP KINGS

“ 21b . . . He removeth kings, and setteth up kings” . . . ” Other versions read , “He removes kings and establishes kings,” NASB “He sets up kings and deposes them,” NIV “by him kings are taken away and kings are lifted up,” BBE “He is causing kings to pass away, and He is raising up kings,” YLT “He appoints kings, and removes them,” Septuagint and “who makes and unmakes kings.” NJB

It is important to understand these are not things God CAN do. Rather, this is the enlightened acknowledge of what the Lord DOES. Even though men may not detect what the Lord is doing, or may even refuse to acknowledge it when told to them, yet these are the facts in the case. In our assessment of worldly governments and rulers, we do not want to be found with less knowledge than Daniel.

The Lord has unquestionable dominion, and is “the Governor among the nations,” or “He rules over the nations” (Psa 22:28). He is the “King” who reigns over the earth’s “kings,” and “Lord” who exercises complete Sovereignty over the “lords” of this world (Deut 17:10; Psa 136:3; 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14; 19:16). The mighty God is even over the gods of this world, who manipulate wicked rulers under the auspices of God Himself. He is appropriately called “the God of gods” (Deut 10:17; Josh 22:22; Psa 136:2; Dan 2:47; 11:36). In this very chapter, Daniel will refer to the God of heaven as “a Lord of kings” (2:47).

With all of the tumult in our present world, this is good to know. Things are not as chaotic as they may seem. God is bringing down some kings and governments, and raising up others. His uncontested rule is even seen in the demise of some spiritual empires, like the Roman Catholic church that is presently reeling under a moral earthquake.

GOD REMOVES KINGS

Mighty rulers are not deposed by accident, or by the wisdom or power of men. God, and God alone, “removes kings.” It is not that He removes some kings, while others are deposed by lesser means. The meaning of our text is that God is the ONE who “removes kings.”

In blessing the Lord, Hannah said of Him, “The LORD killeth . . . He bringeth down to the . . . The LORD maketh poor . . . He bringeth low . . .” (1 Sam 2:6-7). David said, “God is the judge: He

putteth down one ” (Psa 75:6). Here are some examples of removal.

- Pharaoh. “But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever” (Psa 136:15).
- Sihon and Og. “And the LORD shall do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed” (Deut 31:4).
- King Saul. “And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?” (1 Sam 16:1). “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath” (Hos 13:11)..
- Ahab. “So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armor; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake” (1 Kgs 22:37-38)
- Sennacherib. “Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria... So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword” (Isa 37:21,37-38).
- Nebuchadnezzar. “And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws” (Dan 4:32-33).
- Belshazzar. “God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it . . . Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting . . . Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians . . . In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain” (Dan 5:26-28, 30).
- King Herod. “So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died” NKJV (Acts 12:21-23).

GOD SETS UP KINGS

Here are some examples of raising up kings.

- Joseph. “And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house” (Acts 7:9-10).
- Saul. “And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people” (1 Sam 9:17)..
- David. “Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel” (2 Sam 7:8).
- Nebuchadnezzar. “ O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor: and for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down” (Dan 5:18-19).
- Cyrus. “. . . the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me” (2 Chron 36:22-23).
- Pilate. “Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin” (John 19:10-11).

It is ever true, “The LORD . . . He . . . maketh alive . . . bringeth up. The LORD . . . maketh rich : He . . . lifteth up ” (1 Sam 2:6-7). Part of our Lord being “King of kings” is the ability to raise up kings and put them down. Daniel saw this, and confessed it as he blessed the Lord. This was not a Divine option exercised only during a certain period of history. Rather, this is God’s nature, revealed in all periods of time, including our own.

HE GIVES WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

“ 21c . . . He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.” In blessing the Lord, Daniel speaks to the Him of what He has been given to see with greater clarity. The things that have been revealed to him have accented the nature of the God who revealed them. Although the revelation was an exceedingly large one, the God who gave it was even more prominent. When that is recognized and verbalized, God is being “blessed.”

Having given due attention to the raising up and casting down of the rulers of this world, Daniel now gives attention to the dispensing of wisdom and knowledge. He has already acknowledged that wisdom belongs to the Lord (v 20). Now he will confirm that wisdom is dispensed to men by the God to whom it belongs.

Acknowledging Divine Qualities

Frequently men and women of faith acknowledge Divine qualities in their prayers. Some, who are spiritually naive, stumble over this, thinking it serves no purpose to tell God what He already knows. Such souls are not mindful of the vast congregation that are privy to the prayers of the saints. The book of the Revelation suggests that holy angels are somehow involved in the prayers of the saints. Their exact role is not known, but it seems clear our prayers are in some way familiar to them. As it is written, “And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand ” (Rev 8:3-4). How must such holy recognitions sound to these lofty heavenly intelligences? – particularly since they are coming from a race that has fallen into sin and death!

I want to emphasize this is insightful acknowledge, not something that is performed by rote. Lifeless routines have never touched the heart of God, especially since the Sun of righteousness has risen with healing in His wings (Mal 4:2).

Ponder some of the acknowledgments that have been recorded for our learning.

- “Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; and foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him . . . ” (Neh 9:7-8).
- “Thou art my hiding place” (Psa 32:7).
- “Thou art my King, O God” (Psa 44:4).
- “Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah” (Psa 77:14-15).
- “Thou art my portion, O LORD” (Psa 119:57).
- “Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth” (Psa 119:151).

- “O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out” (Psa 44:1-2).
- “For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried” (Psa 66:10).
- “O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah: The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel” (Psa 68:7-8).
- “Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary” (Psa 68:9).
- “Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done” (Acts 4:24-28).

Such perceptive acknowledgments are the wrapping in which effective intercessions and thanksgivings are offered. Let no person deceive you into thinking praying in the language of Scripture is a sign of weakness, or is a useless formality.

WISDOM TO THE WISE

“He giveth wisdom unto the wise . . .” Other versions read, “He gives wisdom to wise men,” NAS and “who confers wisdom on the wise.” NJB

Elsewhere this Divine manner is proclaimed. “For the LORD giveth wisdom” (Prov 2:6). James reminds us that He will give wisdom “liberally,” not upbraiding or finding fault with those who ask for it in faith (James 1:5-6).

One might imagine this verse should read, “He gives wisdom to those who have no wisdom.” After all, they are surely the ones who need it! However, Daniel confesses the Lord gives wisdom to those who are already wise.

Those who are wise enough to ask for wisdom have, by that very deed, displayed uncommon understanding. If God gives wisdom “liberally” (James 1:5), it is because it is needed in abundant measures.

Daniel had already been given wisdom (1:17,20). Now he is given more because a matter had arisen for which he was not yet suited. He therefore acknowledges the wisdom that he has already received, and the fact that “whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance” (Matt 13:12).

At no point is our wisdom sufficient. Just as surely as wise Daniel confronted a circumstance in which more wisdom was needed, so you will also face situations that require a greater supply of graces you already possess. Thank God it is written, “But he giveth more grace” (James 4:6).

KNOWLEDGE TO THEM THAT KNOW

“ . . . and knowledge to them that know understanding.” Other versions read, “knowledge to those who have understanding,” NKJV “knowledge to men of understanding,” NASB and “knowledge to the discerning.” NRSV

Once again, it might appear better to say the Lord gives knowledge to those who do not already possess it. That such a situation exists, I do not deny. But it is certainly not the pinnacle of blessing to be totally bereft of knowledge. God, Daniel confesses, gives knowledge to those who already possess understanding and are discerning. That is, they not only have knowledge, they are in the process of using it. It is possible, as the Spirit says, to “have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:14).

The “new man,” received when we are born again, is “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Col 3:10). That knowledge, however, is more introductory than thorough. As with Daniel, we must seek specific knowledge and discernment during particular tests and opportunities. The people of God can “abound” in knowledge (2 Cor 8:7).

Blessed is the persons who, when facing challenges like Daniel, know they can still obtain wisdom and knowledge from their God. This, like the wisdom that has been mentioned, can only be acquired from the Lord. It cannot be drawn from the broken cistern of nature, or drawn out of the earth’s bag with holes. Further, it is the kind of knowledge that directly relates to your role in the kingdom of God.

HE REVEALS DEEP AND SECRET THINGS

“ 22a He revealeth the deep and secret things . . . ” Other versions read, “It is He who reveals the profound . . . things,” NASB and “who uncovers depths.” NJB

DEEP THINGS

“ He revealeth deep things.” There are matters that are too deep for the natural mind. They extend beyond human abilities, and yet many of them must be known. These are matters that God intends for men to know. However, they cannot be known independently of Himself. Paul calls them “the deep things of God,” and declares that the Holy Spirit searches them out (1 Cor 2:10). The idea is not that the Spirit simply is astute in comprehending these things. Rather, He searches them out for men – to show them what pertains to them, yet cannot be known unless He shows them to the sons of men.

In the case of Daniel, God had sent a dream to Nebuchadnezzar that He wanted men to know and understand. He wanted YOU to understand it, for that dream contained things “pertaining to life and godliness.” However, both the dream itself and its meaning were buried in the depth of Divine mystery. Even though he already had wisdom, Daniel knew not the dream or its meaning. Even though he had been given the ability to interpret all manner of dreams and visions, yet he remained totally ignorant in this case.

Yet, Daniel did not conclude it was something that was not intended to be known. Instead, he sought knowledge of the “deep things” from the One who reveals such realities.

When the Scriptures exclaim, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” they do not intend to stifle the quest to know such things. Rather, such expressions are meant to stir up our faith so that we will inquire into these mysteries. Paul was given to see somewhat of this deep reservoir of knowledge, and, in your measure, so can you.

Which one of us cannot confess with the Psalmist, “Thy thoughts are very deep” (Psa 92:5). In a very limited sense, Solomon introduced the quest for Divine knowledge. You should be able to take his words and apply them appropriately to your own quest to know the things that are freely given to you by God. “All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness” (Eccl 7:23-25).

That was exactly the circumstance in which Daniel found himself. The matter he was required to know was “too far” from him. It was too deep, and he could not reach it – even with his Divinely expanded capabilities. He knew the Lord revealed deep things, so he sought to know them. His prayer was answered.

SECRET THINGS

“He revealeth . . . secret things.” Secret things are hidden things that can be known, if only men will seek them. God has gone on record on this matter. “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant” (Psa 25:14). Again it is written , “His secret is with the righteous” (Prov 3:32). Jesus said to those following Him, “it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 13:11).

If God could say, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” (Gen 18:17), what will He say of those who have believed the record He has given of His Son? (1 John 5:10-11). Will He not be eager to share His secret with them? Will they not be “taught by God?” It is the nature of God to reveal deep things, and make secrets known.

HE KNOWS WHAT IS IN THE DARKNESS

“ 22b . . . He knoweth what is in the darkness . . . ” From one standpoint, there are critical matters that are very deep. From another point of view, they are secret. Now, from yet another view, these things are pictured as surrounded with impenetrable darkness. This darkness is not owing to what surrounds the throne of God, but the environment surrounding “this present evil world.” There is “no darkness at all” in the Lord Himself (1 John 1:5). Those outside of Christ are pictured as sitting “in darkness” (Matt 4:16). Salvation is, in fact, turning men “from darkness to light” (Acts 26:18).

Job once said of the Lord, “He reveals mysteries from the darkness, And brings the deep darkness into light” NASB (Job 12:22). That is the same thing Daniel is saying. The idea is that God shines the illuminating light of understanding upon things that have been hidden by earth’s darkness.

Although Daniel had been given wisdom , knowledge, and understanding, he remained in a world covered with moral and spiritual darkness. That darkness was so thick that no natural ability could uncover things God had made known in that very realm. God had revealed something to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream – something that was highly relevant. Yet, both the dream and its meaning were hidden in darkness – and nature cannot see in the dark.

Daniel knows the king’s dream contains things that can and must be known. He knows he has no ability of himself to obtain that meaning. However, God has no such restraints. He can look into the darkness of this world and tell men what is there, so they can appropriate it. There is no darkness to Him – it is darkness to men. Therefore, they must call upon the Lord to show them what they themselves cannot see.

THE LIGHT DWELLS WITH HIM

“ 22c . . . and the light dwelleth with Him.” Intellectual, moral, and spiritual light dwell with God. Only He can open man’s understanding, and He has a heart to do so for those who delight in Him. In the days of wicked Belshazzar, his wife told him of Daniel. She described him as “a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him ” (5:11). Where did that “light” come from – that remarkable understanding and discernment? It came from God, for “the light dwells with Him.” NIV

I am reminded of a word written by the Psalmist. It says the same thing as our text. “For with thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:9). Because the light “dwells with” God, the closer we are to Him, the more light is shed upon our way. The closer we are to the Lord, the better we understand Him – and the better we understand Him, the more we comprehend His Word, His ways, and matters that concern us.

When one chooses to dwell at a distance from God, he shuts himself away from the light. It simply is not possible to know the Lord, His Word, or His ways while walking at a distance from Him. As it is written, “They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens” (Psa 65:8). That is, one of the effects of being far away from God is that His works tend to frighten, rather than comfort and encourage. Thus, when those who did not know Jesus saw the healed Gadarene demoniac, “they were afraid” (Mark 5:15). Prior to their illumination, when Jesus told the disciples He was going to suffer, die and rise again, they were “afraid to ask Him” what He meant (Mark 9:31-32). When the women came to the tomb in which Jesus was buried, hoping to anoint His body with spices, they confronted a holy angel. When he told them Jesus had risen from the dead, directing them to go and tell His disciples, “they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid” (Mark 16:8).

However, once the light of God fell upon these same people, and the eyes of their understanding were opened, they saw things plainly, and were no longer afraid. In His light, they saw light.

By confessing the light dwelt with God, Daniel was acknowledging his understanding had come from the presence of the Lord. As the mind of the Lord was revealed, it clarified what God had sent. There was not a man upon earth who could illuminate what Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed, or provide an interpretation of it. However, a single night in the presence of the Lord made everything clear to Daniel.

THANKING AND PRAISING

“ 23a I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O thou God of my fathers . . . ” As Daniel nears the end of his prayer, he erupts in thanksgiving to the God of heaven. His words are most precise, reflecting insight as well as adoration.

THANKS AND PRAISE

“I thank Thee, and praise Thee.” Thanks and praise blend well together. They are a spiritual mixture that brings a sweet fragrance into the courts of the Lord. Thanks expresses appreciation for what God has given. Praise is the expression of adoration and reverential fear. The answer received by Daniel prompted both to flow from his great heart.

Thanksgiving and praise are brought together several times in Scripture.

- Knowing the God of heaven, David “appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record [commemorate] , and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel” (1 Chron 16:4).
- The Levites were “to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD , and likewise at even” (1 Chron 23:30).
- When David blessed the Lord before the congregation, he said , “Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name ” (1 Chron 29:13).
- When the ark of the covenant was positioned in the Temple, “the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD ” (2 Chron 5:13).
- Nehemiah reminded the people that “in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God ” (Neh 12:46).
- David himself wrote, “I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving ” (Psa 69:30).
- Again he said, “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving , and into his courts with praise : be thankful unto him, and bless his name” (Psa 100:4).

- And again , “Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving ; sing praise upon the harp unto our God” (Psa 147:7).
- In the time of Ezra “they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD” (Ezra 3:11).

Praise and Worship

It is interesting that thanksgiving and praise are not commonly joined together in our day. We live in a time when a new vocabulary is being formed – one that does not have its root in the Word of God. Hence, it is not possible for it to express a truly spiritual idea.

Today it is fashionable to speak of “praise and worship.” The phrase itself is not found in any translation of Scripture. It carries with it a special meaning designed to describe special times. It almost exclusively is used to portray singing – not singing in general, but a special kind of singing. I certainly do not intend to judge the hearts of those who give themselves to this activity. In fact, it is commendable to aggressively seek to offer God sacrifices of praise.

It is questionable, however, that any activity that is short on insightful thanksgiving and praise reveals any special closeness to the Lord. Daniel had received something. That is why he gave thanks to God and praised Him. He had received understanding. That is why he gave thanks and praised. He was not expressing something he had learned from Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, but something his heart and mind had perceived. God had been good to him, and he knew it. The prayers of the four companions had been heard, and they knew it. Where such knowledge is not in possession, thanksgiving, praise, and worship, are not even possible.

GOD OF MY FATHERS

“ . . . O thou God of my fathers.” Here Daniel acknowledges the godly heritage he had – one that was by Divine appointment. The “fathers” to which he refers were primarily Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Secondarily, they were the Jewish progenitors to whom God had revealed Himself.

Those referring to “my fathers” include Jacob (Gen 47:9,30; 48:15-16), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), Nehemiah (Neh 2:3), and David (Psa 39:12).

In history, there was a Divinely selected race to whom heavenly things were vouchsafed. Paul refers to these things as “the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:4-5). Paul also called this body of people his “fathers.” “But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14).

In this confession, Daniel sides with all who saw, heard, and followed, the living God. He identified with the covenanted people, owning them as his own people. What he had received came from the same God who revealed Himself to the “fathers.” He no doubt knew that, in some significant sense, he was blessed “for the fathers’ sakes” (Rom 11:28). He did not receive this revelation simply for his own sake, but because he was part of a blessed people. Though they had been chastened, they had not been forsaken. He gladly called them “MY fathers.”

In his thanksgiving and praise, Daniel also acknowledges that “the God of the Jews” is separate from the Babylonian gods. This is not a god of wood or stone, but the one who is in heaven! He sees, speaks, and works among men.

WISDOM AND MIGHT ARE GIVEN

“ 23b . . . who hast given ME wisdom and might . . . ” Daniel began this prayer by saying, “ wisdom and might are His” (verse 20). Now he acknowledges that both have been given to him! He has received wisdom to know, and might to declare. He has received wisdom to comprehend, and might to proclaim. Wisdom that is received, yet cannot be declared, is of little or no value. Further, the understanding Daniel has received will require great boldness to declare.

These graces have been “given” to Daniel. He has not received them because he has conducted himself in a disciplined manner, but because he has asked in faith.

A word about this “might” or “power” NIV is in order. This was not military power, like that to which Babylon was accustomed. Daniel commanded no army or fought in any battles. This was power or might to stand against the forces of darkness, and proclaim the truth to political dignities. He will speak in high places for a mighty God. It is written, “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength . Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint ” (Isa 40:29-31).

Here was a man Babylon could not conquer. The king could not make him eat food unlawful and defiling to him. The king’s edict that all wise men in the empire be destroyed could not be executed against Daniel. He came into the king’s court and asked for time to give the king an answer. Now, he will be bold enough to give a message that would mean the death of any one but a man of faith. Where did this “might” come from? It came from the Lord, who made him stand during a moral tornado in

Babylon!

MADE KNOWN TO ME

“ 23c . . . and hast made known unto me now what we desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.” The petition the four presented to the Lord was described in these words. “. . . in order that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon” NASB (verse 18). Now we learn their request more particularly was that God would show them mercy by revealing “the king’s matter.” Remember, this was something no mortal knew, including the king himself. The curious arts of the magicians could not uncover it. The vast intellectual and historical expertise of Babylon’s wise men could not discern it. There was not so much as a hint of what the dream contained, its general nature, or whether it was a warning or a blessing. A person without faith would have concluded the matter was not intended to be known. And, indeed, if the young Judean men had not prayed for the matter to be made known to Daniel, it would have seemed as though such conclusions were justified. However, their faith made them bold enough to ask. It also made Daniel confident enough to receive, and bold enough to speak.

It is still true that many do not receive needed benefits from the Lord simply because they do not ask. As James said, “yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2). Others do ask, yet because they have basically fleshly motives, they do not receive what they so sorely need. As it is written, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3).

It is quite possible for Christians to overestimate their wisdom, strength, and abilities. In such a case, they will not bring their case to the Lord because they do not see the seriousness of their need, or their own poverty to meet it. Secondly, it is also possible for Christians to have their own will out in front of the will of the Lord. When this happens their covetous spirit withholds good things from them.

It is vital to note that four young men, in a heathen empire, and favored by the king, made their own will subordinate to that of God. Daniel’s three companions did not pray for themselves, but that God would reveal the secret to Daniel. Daniel, on the other hand, gave the credit for the answer to the prayers of all four.

ME AND WE

There is something interesting in this prayer. First, Daniel confesses, “hast given ME wisdom and might, and hast made known unto ME now what WE desired of thee.” Then, he applies the

revelation to all four: “for thou hast now made known unto US the king's matter.”

First, Daniel is the one who received the required knowledge. Second, the other three shared in the benefit of the revelation. I also do not doubt that Daniel shared the answer with his companions, giving due credit to the God who gave it. Thus God also revealed the secret to the others, choosing to do so through Daniel, rather than in a night vision. For all of them, however, the Source of the knowledge was the Lord.

CONCLUSION

God has provided us a most excellent example of how to respond to crisis. First , it is good to inform the parties involved that we are seeking the Lord, as Daniel informed Nebuchadnezzar. Second , it is comely to share the matter with kindred spirits who share our interest in the glory of God. Third , it is also profitable to place personal interests in the background, making them subordinate to the greater good. Fourth , when our prayers are answered, let us be swift to give thanks and praise to the God we serve. Ever remember, God’s glory means our good.

We also see that God will not allow His children to be tempted above their ability. His faithfulness will provide a way of escape, that they may be able to bear the trial. In our text, that way was the provision of knowledge and understanding. It did, in fact, deliver them from death, opening the way for the future productive ministry of Daniel. Just as the turning of water into wine was the beginning of Jesus’ miracles, so this will be the beginning of Daniel’s extended and prolific prophetic ministry.

Who knows what threshold you may be occupying at this time? Perhaps there is some great work for which you are being readied. Be alert and faithful, redeeming the time. You may have come to the Kingdom such a time as this.

The Prophecy of Daniel

DANIEL BOLDLY STANDS BEFORE THE KING

Lesson #8

INTRODUCTION

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah have received the answer to their prayer. They have petitioned the God of heaven for “mercies” to know “the king’s matter,” and He has graciously responded during the night. Daniel has not only been given to know what Nebuchadnezzar dreamed, he has been granted the understanding of its meaning. Additionally, confidence and boldness have been given to him, for they will be required to stand before the king and make known what God has shown to him. It is the nature of faith to appropriate confidence as well as insight, and assurance as well as understanding. Faith is like a key that unlocks the Divine treasury, then grants the ability to appropriate its riches.

PERCEPTION AND ENDURANCE

In accordance with the nature of faith, Daniel has blessed the God of heaven, confessing Him to be the source of all wisdom and might. His prayer reflected the understanding of faith, for faith enables those possessing it to more fully comprehend the Source of the blessing, as well as the blessing itself. Thus it is written that Moses “endured, as seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). The idea is that his endurance was traceable to his perception of the Lord. The NIV appropriately reads, “he persevered because he saw Him who is invisible.”

Daniel’s boldness and confidence was produced by His understanding of the Lord. In answer to the prayer of Daniel and his companions, God had made known “the king’s matter” – what he dreamed, and what it meant. An even greater light, however, was focused upon the Lord Himself. This is the first prayer recorded in the book of Daniel. We also have in this text the first insightful verbalization of the glory of God.

- Wisdom is God’s.
- Might is God’s.
- God changes times.
- God changes seasons.
- God removes kings.
- God sets up kings.
- God gives wisdom to the wise.
- God gives knowledge to those with understanding.
- He reveals deep and secret things.
- God knows what is in the darkness.
- Light dwells with God.

I am suggesting those insights accompanied the revelation of the dream sent to Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation. The boldness and confidence Daniel now possesses does not come because he has comprehended the “king’s matter,” but because he has perceived the Lord of glory.

A Principle

Here is a principle in the Kingdom of God: faith has more to do with God Himself than circumstance. Illumination shines the greater light upon the Lord, and the lesser light upon circumstance. This is the meaning of that beautiful Psalmic expression: “For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:9). This very reality was fulfilled in Daniel. It was in the light of who God is that Daniel was shown the king’s dream and its meaning.

GOD INTRUDES IN HUMAN AFFAIRS

Daniel has insightfully confessed that God intrudes into the domain of time. He changes times

and seasons. He removes kings and sets them up. He does not ask their consent to do so. That circumstance not only involves His power and wisdom, it is His nature. This is not merely what God CAN do, but what He DOES. There has never been a period human history when God did not make changes in times and seasons.

BEFORE THE LAW

- In the Garden (Gen 3:24).
- In dealing with Cain (Gen 4:14-16).
- In the flood (Gen 6-8).

- In the plains of Shinar (Gen 11).
- In the calling of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3).
- In the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19).
- In the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Ex 12).

DURING THE LAW

- The giving of the Law (Ex 19-20).
- During the time of Gideon (Judges 6).
- In the reigns of David and Solomon (2 Sam 5:10.; 1 Chron 11:9; 1 Kgs 4:21,24).
- In the Babylonian captivity (Jer 20:4; 25:11) .

AFTER THE LAW

- In the birth of John the Baptist (Luke 1:15-17, 67-80).
- In the birth of Jesus (Matt 1:20).
- In the death of Jesus (Heb 2:14).
- In the resurrection of Jesus (Rom 1:4).
- In the ascension and enthronement of Jesus (Eph 4:8; Phil 2:9).
- On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
- In the acceptance of the Gentiles (Acts 14:27).

GOD HAS NOT CHANGED

There are still people – devoutly religious people – who struggle with the level of involvement God has among the sons of men. There is a prominent strain of theology that affirms the age of Divine intrusion into the affairs of men either exists no longer, or is vastly restricted, as compared to previous ages. Nothing in the Scriptures remotely suggests that the God of heaven has experienced a change of nature – and a cessation of Divine working necessarily requires a change in Divine character.

If anything, God has increased His involvements with those who are in Christ Jesus. Ponder the promises that require His intervention in human affairs.

- God gives us our daily bread (Matt 6:11).
- God leads not into temptation but delivers from evil (Matt 6:13).
- He is working all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).
- He causes us always to triumph in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 2:14).
- He makes His children increase and abound in love toward one another (1 Thess 3:12).
- Believers are taught by God to love one another (1 Thess 4:9).
- God Himself directs the way of His people (1 Thess 3:11).
- He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and reserve the unjust until the day of judgment (2 Pet 2:9).
- It is God who works in believers both to will and to do of His own good pleasure (Phil 2:13).
- The God of peace works in us that which is well pleasing in His sight (Heb 13:20-21).
- The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry (Psa 34:15).
- In the various capacities of the body of Christ, “it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1 Cor 12:6).

FAITH PRESUMES AN ACTIVE GOD

Faith in God presumes a working, active God – else faith could yield no true benefit. In fact, I know of nothing in the word or concept of “faith” that allows for an idle or inactive God. Phrases like “the eyes of the Lord” (Zech 4:10; 1 Pet 3:12), “the arm of the Lord” (Isa 51:9; John 12:38), and “the face of the Lord” (1 Pet 3:12), presume Divine activity . It is right to expect God to work in the behalf of His people, and to be involved with them.

Daniel and his companions prayed to a God they knew could DO something. They were not motivated by a system of religious persuasions or pattern of theology, but by the persuasion of a living God. Today, that same persuasion will move people to seek the Lord, asking Him for things they sorely need, yet do not yet possess. We are urged to make our requests known to God (Phil 4:6-7). Daniel did, so can you!

BRING ME TO THE KING!

“ 24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation.” Having blessed the Lord, Daniel’s spirit is now charged with Divine power. The human spirit is effected by fellowship with God and spiritual illumination. Those with faith can stand before those who seek to destroy them. They can give satisfactory explanations to a king who is angry. By faith, and through the reception of “mercies” from the Lord, Daniel is bold, confident, knowledgeable, wise, and understanding. He is now ready to stand

before the king.

DANIEL GOES TO ARIOCH

“Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon.” It is not by coincidence that an emphasis is made of Arioch’s current role in the kingdom: “ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon,” among whom Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are numbered. Thus we see that “the weapon that is formed against” Daniel will not prosper (Isa 54:17).

Note that Daniel knows where to find Arioch. Knowing its importance, He has maintained his grasp of the situation. We do not know if Arioch was stationed in some area in which the wise men were being destroyed, or if he was located in the palace of the king. But Daniel made it his business to know where the one “ordained to destroy the wise men in Babylon” was located. His own life, as well as those of his companions depended upon him knowing the location of Arioch. Spiritual wisdom does not ignore practical matters.

It is important to note that Daniel did not go “in unto Arioch” until he had “answered” the revelation given him by blessing God.

Note, Daniel does not take it upon himself to barge into the presence of the king. Instead, he goes to Arioch, whom I am sure he realized had immediate access to the king. At this point, the faith of Daniel again becomes very evident. He is not fearful that Arioch may misrepresent him or deny his request. God had begun a good work in Arioch, and Daniel sensed the Lord would carry it through. He will follow proper protocol, giving honor to whom honor is due, all the while trusting in the Lord. You should know from your own experience that a great of peace and calmness is required to proceed in such a manner. It is ever true, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee” (Isa 26:3).

An Observation

This is an aspect of faith we do well to ponder. Too often the conduct of the professed church has led people to believe serving God causes a person to become ignorant in practical matters. This is a contributing factor to the erroneous conclusion that faith has nothing to do with the issues of daily life. All manner of foolishness has been flaunted in the face of the world by those who wear the name of Jesus. It ranges from domestic disturbance to financial instability. People profess to know God, yet do not apparently know how to handle daily challenges and inconveniences.

It is not my intention to cast aspersions at such people, for I have difficulties in practical matters also. What I do want you to consider is that such conditions do not need to continue. How would Daniel have faired if he fell apart during a crisis, or could not maintain a grasp of critical situations? Faith widens our vision, it does not restrict it. It enables us to be more discerning, not less discerning. I

challenge you to call faith into a more prominent role in your daily life.

This account of Daniel testifies to the effectiveness of such a faith. On a given day, without being expected, Daniel faced the king's chief executioner. His life, and that of his companions, was in the balance. Yet, faith had made him ready. He knew how to respond to the confrontation. He knew what to tell the king. He knew how to tell his companions. He knew how they ought to pray. He knew how to respond to heaven's answer. And now, he knows how to speak to Arioch, an executioner with a kingly mandate.

DESTROY NOT THE WISE MEN

"He went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon . . ." Here was a word that directly contradicted the word of the king. The king "commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon" (2:12). Arioch had been "ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon." Now Daniel says, "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon." It surely required boldness and confidence to say such words!

It is evident that the destruction was already under way. Arioch surely would not have delayed to immediately carry out the word of the angry king. He knew full well that he had been appointed to carry out the word of Nebuchadnezzar. The very mandate he had received testified to the total intolerance of the king for insubordination, or a failure to do precisely what he said.

If this is evident to us, it must have been even more evident to Daniel. Yet, faith enables him to rise above the seeming impossibility of the situation. He in effect says, "Do not do what you have been commissioned to do by the sovereign of Babylon!"

This word was not spoken because of any great love Daniel had for the wise men of Babylon. They were worshipers of false gods, and some of them derived their information from the rulers of the darkness of this world. Yet, even under the Old Covenant, Daniel, like his God, had "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezek 33:11). The man of God did not take personally the failure of the wise men, desiring that they pay the penalty for bringing a sentence of death upon Daniel and his companions. He lived out loving one's enemies by asking for them to be spared. Surely, he is a noble example for us all.

BRING ME BEFORE THE KING

". . . bring me in before the king." Daniel makes no attempt to barge into the presence of the king. He that believes "shall not make haste" (Isa 28:16). Faith moves him to know how to make known the knowledge and understanding that has been given to him. There is a wisdom in faith that is most remarkable. It is as though faith is a wide channel through which needed resources are funneled into both the heart and mind.

Daniel does not ask that Arioch represent him, but that he himself be brought before the king. Faith does not balk at standing before dignitaries. Joseph stood before Pharaoh under much the same circumstances as Daniel now stands (Gen 41:14-39). Moses stood before Pharaoh to order him to release the people of God (Eph 5:1-20). Paul boldly stood before Felix (Acts 24:24-25), Agrippa (Acts 26:1-18), and even Caesar (Acts 25:21; 27:24).

Faith Dissolves Timidity

Faith can dissolve timidity, bringing godly courage to stand and speak what God has shown to the individual. Every aspiring preacher and teacher should be regularly reminded of this. Even those with no earthly credentials can, if motivated by faith, duly impress those who have them all. As it is written, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Even though Daniel had previously impressed the king with his wisdom and understanding (1:20), he was not well known to the king. He could not come into the king’s presence upon the basis of his reputation or familiarity with him. Like converted Saul of Tarsus, another had to speak in his behalf (Acts 9:26-27). Faith, of course, is humble, and will accept such requirements.

I WILL SHOW THE INTERPRETATION

“ . . . and I will show unto the king the interpretation.” Notice how Daniel states the case. He says he will deliver the interpretation, not the dream, to the king. As we will see, Daniel told the king both the dream itself and the interpretation. However, here he emphasizes the interpretation, which is what the wise men of Babylon said they could NOT deliver unless the king told them his dream.

When Daniel had previously appeared before Nebuchadnezzar, he promised he “he would show the king the interpretation” of his dream (2:16). That was at the heart of what Nebuchadnezzar wanted to know.

I HAVE FOUND A MAN

“ 25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.” God is in this whole matter, manipulating the circumstances and turning hearts in order to the revelation of His good pleasure. Confronted with an executioner from the king of Babylon, Daniel has known how to

respond appropriately. He has been granted an audience with the king, who has granted time for Daniel to gain knowledge from the Most High. Daniel and his three friends have been moved to pray, asking for mercies, which the Lord delights to give. Their prayer has been answered, and God has been praised and lauded for it. Daniel has known how to address the one sent to destroy the wise men of Babylon. Now, with swift dispatch, Arioch, the one sent to destroy the wise men, brings one of them to the king.

The Remarkable Circumstances

This is not the result of mere human ingenuity. God has been working in Daniel “both to will and to do of His own good pleasure” (Phil 2:13). We are witnessing the outworking of Divine purpose, and the manner in which the Lord fulfills His will. Ponder the complexity of the situation before us. Four captives are in Babylon. The king over Babylon rules the entire world. The wise men of the empire, because of their failure, have been condemned to death by the king. The mandate has gone out, and the slaughter is under way. Daniel and his friends are ignorant of the whole situation, learning of it when an executioner turns up at their dwelling.

Add to this scenario that Israel is being chastened by the Lord, and that the chastening, intended to be seventy years long, has just begun. Everything is against Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They have been officially classified among a group of people that have been condemned to death. How can anything good come out of these circumstances? Ah, you of tender heart, God can manage these circumstances, bringing an advantage to Daniel, and vaulting him into prominence in the midst of them all. A condemned wise man who trusts in the Lord will live and not die.

Let no person, regardless of the adverse conditions around them, or the hopelessness of their situation, imagine that God cannot bring good out of it! Men may mean things for evil, but God, meaning them for good, will turn them to your advantage! This is not theological speculation, but is being declared with great power in this very text.

BROUGHT TO THE KING IN HASTE

“Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste . . .” When Arioch went out, he was the one giving the orders. Now he is receiving orders, and following the word of one he was sent to kill. Is that not a marvelous thing of itself?

Why In Haste?

Men may speculate why Arioch quickly brought Daniel to the king. Perhaps it was because he was glad to stop the slaughter he had begun. Perhaps he was elated that someone who could give the king what he desired had been found. Maybe he did so because he sensed how glad the king would be to hear the explanation desired so intensely. It is possible he considered how angry the king would be if his sentence was not carried out with dispatch. Thus he brought Daniel quickly, knowing if the king was displeased he could get back to the slaughter quickly.

In my judgment, such speculations yield no satisfaction for the heart. The “haste” of Arioch was driven from above, not beneath. God was in this whole matter, bringing things to a conclusion that would give glory to Him, and yield great comfort and encouragement to His people through the ages. Once the answer from God is received, there is no further justification for delay! To borrow an expression from David , “the king's business required haste” (1 Sam 21:80).

I HAVE FOUND A MAN

“ . . . and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.” Bringing Daniel to the king with hast, Arioch declares he has found a man who can grant the king what he desires.

I Have Found

It must sounded strange for the chief of the executioners to say he had found a qualified man. That certainly is not the mission on which the king had sent him. He was sent out “to slay the wise men of Babylon” (verse 14). Now he enters the king’s presence with a message that sounds as though he made an earnest effort to find someone who could interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.

From a human point of view, Arioch must introduce Daniel in such a way as will not leave the king wondering why his sovereign commission was not being carried out. From the higher perspective, God is no doubt putting words in Arioch’s mouth that will subdue an outburst of wrath. God can do such a thing, and is frequently said to do so.

- BALAAM. “And the LORD put a word in Balaam's mouth , and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak” (Num 23:5,16).
- ISRAEL. “And I have put My words in thy mouth , and I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art My people” (Isa 51:16).
- ISRAEL. “As for me, this is My covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth , shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever” (Isa 59:21).
- JEREMIAH. “Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth ” (Jer 1:9).
- APOSTLES. “For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say” NKJV (Luke

12:12).

Viewing the activities of men from the Lord's point of view, Solomon wrote, "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD" (Prov 16:1). Arioch no doubt had a personal reason for addressing the king as he did. But over and above his objectives, the purpose of God was being served. We are beholding HOW God works things together for the good of His people. He enables His people to have appropriate responses. He can incline the hearts of those who would harm them to listen. He can move Arioch to bring Daniel to the king swiftly. And He can move Arioch to speak words that will assuage the anger of the king.

Of the Captives of Judah

"I have found a man of the captives of Judah." The chief executioner does not say one of the wise men has the answer, but that one of the "captives of Judah" has it. These are words "fitly spoken," and will not further arouse the anger of the king. When Nebuchadnezzar sees Daniel, he will not make an immediate association with the condemned wise men, but will more readily recall how impressed he was with Daniel when he tested him.

Also, this introduction will further promote humility in Daniel, moving him to rely upon his identity with God rather than with the elite wise men of Babylon. Daniel had gained infinitely more from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, than from the teachers of Babylon. His tutelage under the Law of God brought far more advantage than the language and literature of the Chaldeans. All of these advantages are summoned up by the reference to "Judah."

While at one time it may have been very prestigious to be counted among this distinguished group, it was no advantage now. Now, in the presence of a king, last known for being angry, being a captive Jew was far more advantageous than being a Babylonian wise man.

It is an invariable trait of the wisdom of the world that it proves vastly inferior in the hour of crisis. However highly it may be esteemed, you will learn by experience that it fails you when you need it the most. It is during such times that it becomes more evident to the believer that it is far better to be related to God than to have the best the world has to offer.

The Interpretation

". . . that will make known unto the king the interpretation." There is no indication that Daniel told Arioch what God had revealed to him. He only said he would tell the king the dream and its interpretation. But Arioch does not doubt the word of Daniel. Risking his own life, he tells the king Daniel will make known the interpretation of his troubling dream. He appears to have no doubts, even though he will surely be put to death if Daniel fails. How is it that he can speak with such seeming confidence. It is not merely because he cares for Daniel. That is not sufficient reason to risk his own life. Even Ashpenaz was unwilling to risk his life for the sake of Daniel, even though God had given Daniel

favor in his sight (1:9-10). The executioner does not have one mote of evidence that Daniel can interpret the king's dream, except for the word of Daniel himself. Arioch's bold words were pushed through his lips by the Lord. Heaven was in charge of this situation, not Nebuchadnezzar or Arioch!

In contemporary use, the word "interpretation" is not a strong word. It is often associated with a private view, and is not considered to always be expert testimony. But this is not how the word is used in Scripture. Doubtful testimony is called "private interpretation" (2 Pet 1:20), or an explanation deduced by the speaker himself. The word used in the Second Peter text (**evpilu,sew**) is used a single time in all of Scripture. There, we are told this kind of interpretation has no part whatsoever in the formation of Scripture.

Another word is used where unquestionable truth is intended. Sample uses of "interpret" in this sense include the following.

- "And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (John 1:42).
- "And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (John 9:7).
- "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did" (Acts 9:36).
- "But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith" (Acts 13:8).
- "To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues" (1 Cor 12:10).
- "How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation" (1 Cor 14:26).
- "To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace" (Heb 7:2).

Each of these texts rules out the possibility of a private view, or opinion. Similar uses of the words "interpret" and "interpretation" are found in Moses and the Prophets (Gen 40:5-18; Judges 7:15; Prov 1:6; Eccl 8:1; Dan 2:4-45; 4:6-24; 5:7-26; 7:16). What Arioch promised was what Daniel said he would do – give the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. He would not provide a possible meaning, or suggest various hypotheses. What Daniel said would be the solitary meaning of the dream.

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

With the present inordinate value place on academics, human opinion and personal persuasion have been granted increased hearing in the church. People have been brought to believe that pooling a host of varied opinions somehow brings required answers to us. You can imagine what would have happened if Nebuchadnezzar had granted such a procedure in his court! The king wanted to know what the dream was and what it meant. He was not interested in the private opinion of one of the astrologers, or the suggestion of one of the magicians.

It is good to remember that what God reveals does have a meaning. That meaning is not determined by consensus, and does not come closer to our understanding as it is passed through the intellectual filter of human opinion. In fact, that process puts the truth at an even greater distance from us. This is what caused our Lord's teaching to stand out amidst all of the doctors of the Law. It was said of Him, "For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matt 7:29). Somehow it came across to honest and good hearts that Jesus knew what He was talking about. He was not giving them a "private interpretation," but what the truth really was and meant.

That is ever the manner of the Kingdom. If the truth is going to burrow into the hearts of men, someone must rise who knows what God is talking about – someone with an understanding of God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, and His eternal purpose. Just as surely as Daniel's life was in the balance, so our lives are directly impacted by the truth of God. We really cannot afford to be wrong. True religion is not an arena for experimentation and philosophizing.

ARE YOU ABLE?

"26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?" Now, for the first time in this book, the Divine spotlight shines upon the person of Daniel. Prior to this, an emphasis was placed on the king's diet. Then it was placed upon the king's testing of the four children of Judah. Finally, the emphasis was upon Nebuchadnezzar's need to have his dream known and interpreted. But now the accent has shifted to young Daniel. He will be put to the test to see whether he can provide what no other man in all the world could supply. God has prepared him for this hour, and thus he will be able to enter into it with "the full assurance of faith" and "the full assurance of understanding" (Heb 10:22; Col 2:2).

WHOSE NAME WAS BELTESHAZZAR

"Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar." You will remember that this name was given to Daniel by Ashpenaz, the prince of the eunuchs (1:7). This is the very first time that name is mentioned since

given to Daniel at least three years earlier. Twice in this book Nebuchadnezzar calls Daniel by his Babylonian name (4:9,18). All of the other references say Daniel was “called Belteshazzar,” but no one else of record called him by that name. Daniel is referred to by this name under the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar (4:8,19), Belshazzar (5:12), and Cyrus (10:1).

The name “Belteshazzar” means “Bel’s prince,” or “the one whom Bel favors.” McClintok/Strong Bel was a Babylonian god, and is mentioned in Isaiah 46:1, Jeremiah 50:2, and 51:44. Isaiah declares Bel bowed down under burdens. Jeremiah declares he is “confounded” and will be “punished” by the God of heaven.

It seems to me that a point is being made here by the Spirit. First, Bel, nor any other god of Babylon, was able to deliver an answer to the king. Those who served Bel had the sentence of death passed upon them because they could not come up with an answer – even a concocted one. Daniel was, indeed, named “Belteshazzar,” the one favored by Bel. But he will answer as one favored by the God of heaven. The interpretation will come from Daniel, favored of God, not Belteshazzar, favored by Bel.

ARE YOU ABLE?

“Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?” Other versions read, “Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?,” NKJV and “Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?” NIV

The degree of sincerity in Nebuchadnezzar’s question is difficult to measure. Was he asking a question like Pilate did to Jesus: “Art Thou king of the Jews?” or “What is truth?” If so, then the question would be something like this: “Are YOU able to make known to me . . .” Was Daniel, a hostage from a city Nebuchadnezzar easily overthrew really able to provide the king’s demand? Can one of the Jews, who fell before his onslaught, step forward and supply what his cultured wise men could not do? Is this young man, barely beyond the border of youth REALLY able to do this?

Of course, that is all from an earthly point of view. Looking at the situation through faith, the king’s heart has been turned toward Daniel. He does not threaten him with death, but opens the door for him to declare what the Lord has shown to him.

I do not cease to marvel at the remarkable details in the working of the Lord. Out of a haberdashery of a, unknown dream, troublesome nights, a Babylonian king, the chief of the executioners, a motley band of condemned wise men, a mandate of death, and a young captive Hebrew, God has produced an occasion for the revelation of something He has determined! How true it is, praise the Lord! “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom 11:33).

A SOLEMN REMINDER

“ 27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king.” The time has come for Daniel to speak. The revelation he has been given must be declared. He is not required to simply share it with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. That would be easy enough. He must speak before an earthly monarch that appears to hold Daniel’s life in his hand. Whether Daniel knew of the Lord’s way of dispensing power in as precise a way as has been revealed in Christ, I do not know. But he sensed in his heart the very thing that Jesus affirmed to Pilate. “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above” NASB (John 19:11).

The very dream God had revealed to him, together with its interpretation, unveiled the Sovereign rule of God. I do not doubt that the message Daniel had been given buoyed up his spirit as he stood before the king. He was “first partaker of the fruits” of his message (2 Tim 2:6).

A Lesson to be Learned

There is surely a lesson to be learned here. What the Lord shows you will sustain you. It will embolden you and give you confidence and assurance. Truth is to be proclaimed. Make no mistake about that. Yet, that very truth will sustain and refurbish the soul who is bold enough to speak it out. What person who loves the truth has not found this to be true? Has not many a weary and troubled soul suddenly been renewed when the truth of God became more clear to them? Even if they were given a word to declare to someone else, did they not find that very word to be a sweet elixir of comfort to their own soul?

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE KING

“Daniel answered in the presence of the king .” Now Daniel, but a young and inexperienced man, stands before the most illustrious ruler of the era of global empires. He has a message to give that will place the accent on the “God of the Jews,” and upon His purpose. This is not the God that Nebuchadnezzar worships. He has dared to place the vessels of the house of Daniel’s God in the house of his false god (1:2).

The truth uttered by “the sweet psalmist of Israel” was in the heart and mind of Daniel. “In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me” (Psa 56:4). Centuries later, Paul would take up the chorus and sing it more loudly, “for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:5-6). As the mighty prophet Isaiah would say, “This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD” (Isa 54:17).

Perhaps you have a message you must declare before your own Nebuchadnezzar. Maybe you are in a king's court, where you are not accustomed to stand. Let your thoughts take hold of the account before us. Daniel was subject to the same kind of infirmities as those with which you wrestle. The account of how he handled this event can be a trumpet sound from heaven, assuring you of strength as well.

THE IMPOTENCE OF THE WISE MEN

“The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king.” At once Daniel emphasizes why Nebuchadnezzar requires assistance. It is not because he has been forgetful. His inability to remember what he had dreamed was not due to a loss of sleep, or some other inconvenient circumstance. The dream was a “secret.” It had been hidden from the king, and that is why he could not remember it.

Even though the king was demanding, exerting all of his sovereign power, he could not constrain the wise men of Babylon to provide him with an answer. His political position could not make it happen. His great authority and power could not produce so much as a spark of wisdom among the wise men. He “demanded,” but he could not make things happen. That is a prerogative God has reserved for Himself.

Mind you, Daniel was not present when the demand was made. He has received his information from Arioch, the chief of the king's executioners – and we do not know that Arioch was there. Yet Daniel knows what the king has demanded, and who was there. Now he waxes bold and declares what these wise men were not able to do.

The wise men, with all of their vast panorama of knowledge, familiarity with the literature of Babylon, historical records, and acquaintance with the manners and demands of the king, could not show the king what he wanted. Their well was not deep enough.

The astrologers, with their claim to discover future events by the position and path of the stars, had to admit the king had asked something of them that was impossible. Their horoscopes, monthly prognostications, and astrological predictions were powerless to give them an answer. Whatever boast their pretended science made, its mouth was stopped by one request from the king.

The magicians, with all of their superstitions and eminence in learning took their place along side the powerless wise men and astrologers. Nothing in their craft could dredge up an answer for Nebuchadnezzar. Like the magicians of Egypt, their powers ran out. What was required of them demanded more than their source could supply.

The sorcerers, with their incantations, narcotic substances, and invocation of infernal spirits, had to give up. That to which they had devoted their lives was no better than the ignorance of the greatest fool in Babylon. With a single dream, Nebuchadnezzar had brought their house of knowledge tumbling to the ground. They were just as impotent as the others who were classed as the wise men of Babylon's mighty empire.

Daniel Declares the Facts

Daniel does not overlook the impotence of the king's court of knowledge and expertise. He solemnly reminds the king that he has not been able to obtain what he desired from those whom he himself had designated as wise.

There comes a time when those who have trusted in vanity must be shown how futile it was to do so. It has been God's manner to do this – to show to men the absurdity of things in which they have put their trust and hope. Often God has chided those who trusted in vanity.

- “Where are they? where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt” (Isa 19:12).
- “But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah” (Jer 2:28).
- “Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?” (Jer 37:19).
- “Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee” (Isa 47:13).

Divine Intentions and Causes

The Lord is dedicated to publicly displaying the vanity of worldly wisdom. He chooses the times and the circumstances in which this will be done. But make no mistake about this, it will be done. Thus it is written, “I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself, and spreading out the earth all alone, causing the omens [signs] of boasters to fail, making fools out of diviners, causing wise men to draw back, and turning their knowledge into foolishness” NASB (Isa 44:24-25). With God, this is an aggressive agenda. There is no age when He has abandoned this intention. If men have eyes to see and ears to hear, the Lord is continually putting on display the vanity of worldly wisdom and ingenuity.

In explaining why he preached the Gospel without mingling it with cunning words and whit,

Paul referred to this Divine manner. “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel : not with wisdom of words , lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise , and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent . Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world ? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor 1:17-21).

The Ultimate Display

The ultimate exhibit of the futility and emptiness of this world’s wisdom is found in the power of the Gospel of Christ. The world’s most eminent theologians and politicians saw with their own eyes “God manifest in the flesh.” They could not properly assess Him in their own wisdom. They concluded He was an imposter and was worthy of death. The Lord Jesus piled evidence upon evidence before their eyes, and spoke words none of them could effectively contradict. Here was the Wisdom of God, standing before them, speaking gracious words, and working wondrous things. Still, it is written, “Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor 2:8).

Our Time

We are living in a time when the wisdom of men is being unduly exalted. Men and women are being taught to assess spiritual matters with worldly wisdom – to pass the circumstances of life through intellectual filters that have been devised by men. Those with deep spiritual problems are being offered diagnoses that have neither truth nor power in them. Explanations for human conduct are being pandered to the masses that have no power to transform, and do not enable needy souls to rise above the flesh. The Word of God itself is being analyzed as though it was in a convenient test tube. We are living in critical times.

However, in orchestrating the affairs of men, God has a way of dashing all of this wisdom upon the rocks of futility. He can bring people to a point where those in whom they trust can no longer help them – just like the wise men of Babylon could not help Nebuchadnezzar. Much of the frustration that exists in our Western culture is directly traceable to the inability of the world’s wise men to satisfy the needs and desires of honest people. It is God who has caused their wisdom to fail, just as surely as He frustrated the magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers of Babylon.

In this text God has so arranged things as to display the vanity of Babylonian wisdom. Further, lest it escape Nebuchadnezzar’s attention, God’s prophet Daniel is pointing out that vanity. That is God’s manner. Should the lesson ever be taught to you, it will be well to give heed to it.

There are things the world cannot produce! Its wisdom is vanity, and its power is but an imagination in such matters. It is God’s nature to make sure the wisdom of this world is brought to nothing, and the understanding of the prudent is smashed to the ground. Just as surely as the Lord did

with Nebuchadnezzar, He will challenge those who trusted in such wisdom to obtain what they need from that vain and foolish source. Before Nebuchadnezzar received an answer, he had to try to get the answer from his wise men. In that effort, he would see their inadequacy.

THERE IS A GOD IN HEAVEN

“ 28a But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.” At some point, those who seek answers, direction, power, or any other needed resource, are going to have to come to the Lord. Their eyes are going have to look upward, and their affection must be set on things above (Col 3:1-3). Until this happens, life cannot and will not be truly satisfying, productive, or eternally profitable.

After pointing out the impotence of Babylon’s wise men, Daniel now draws attention to the Source of wisdom. He will not only contrast the Living God with the false gods of Babylon, he will also inform Nebuchadnezzar that God has been dealing with him. He has chosen to make known to the king of Babylon the destiny of all worldly kingdoms, as well as the entrance and dominance of His own kingdom.

“BUT”

“BUT there is . . . ” Even though a satisfactory wise man could not be found in all of Babylon, hope was not lost. There is a dimension to life that has its source and direction outside of this world. The fact that the world at its best cannot plumb the depths of a matter does not mean it is unknowable. There are things that eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and that no mortal mind has conceived – yet they have been made known to the sons of men (1 Cor 2:9-10). We have just such a case before us. Now that earth has failed – utterly failed – heaven will be brought into the picture. Now that the wisdom of men has proved helpless, the wisdom of God will be made known. Now that the gods of men have been shown to be vain, the God of heaven will be declared.

“But” is a Scriptural word that picks up where the powers of men and the world ended. “But” is a word that brings hope where there was hopelessness, understanding where there was ignorance, and sight where there was blindness. It is a word through which faith enters into a “large room” (Psa 31:8). How frequently the Holy Spirit lifts our minds, shifts our vision, and cheers our hearts with this single word.

- When Samson was perishing with thirst. “ BUT GOD clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived”

(Judges 15:19).

- When David was hounded by king Saul, who aggressively sought to kill him. “ BUT GOD delivered him not into his hand” (1 Sam 23:14).
- When the enemies of the faithful appear to be gaining the upper hand. “ BUT GOD shall wound the head of his enemies” (Psa 68:21).
- When human strength utterly fails. “BUT GOD is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Psa 73:26).
- When Peter could not see that the Gentiles should hear the Gospel. “ BUT GOD hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28).
- When we were hopelessly condemned as sinners. “ BUT GOD commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).
- When we are seeming tempted and tested beyond our ability. “ BUT GOD is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13).
- When we were dead in trespasses and sins . “ BUT GOD , who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved” (Eph 2:4-5).
- When Epaphroditus grew sick, and it looked as though he was going to die. “ BUT GOD had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow” (Phil 2:27).

You Must Make the Transition

As you read this account, you must make the transition from Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel to your own case. The very area in which you are struggling or troubled is the one in which you must find “BUT GOD.” It may seem as though you have battered your head against a wall. Solutions and answers may appear to be getting further from you. Your strength may be fading away . But neither your circumstance nor your assessment is the end of the matter. After you have reviewed all of the troubling and helpless circumstances, have the faith to put a comma after them, not a period, and say “BUT!”

This is precisely what Daniel is doing in our text. He is taking over where the wise men left off. He is acknowledging that Nebuchadnezzar has been challenged with something for which the world has no answer.

THERE IS A GOD IN HEAVEN

Before Daniel speaks of the works of God, He first speaks of God Himself: “there is a God!” All sound theology begins with this postulate: “There is a God!” If that is not true, then no point of theology is true. If it is true, everything about true theology is not only true, but relevant, and pertinent to the affairs of men. Faith also begins with this premise: “There is a God!” As it is written, “he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb 11:6). Before men seek something from God, they must first be persuaded of His Person. Those who stand in doubt of God’s existence, or of His power, will be able to proceed no further. That is the starting point. This, Daniel begins at the proper place.

Immediately, Daniel raises the thoughts of the king – away from the lowlands of this world to heaven. Here, he is not speaking about the starry heavens, space, or some other facet of the vast expanse of creation. In the book of Daniel alone, the word “heaven” is mentioned thirty-two times (2:18,19,28,27,28,44; 4:11,12,13,15,20,21,22,23,25,31,33,34,35,37; 5:21,23; 6:27; 7:2,13,27; 8:8,10; 9:12; 11:4; 12:7). Every single reference has to do with God Himself, something He revealed, or something He was doing.

The fact that God is in heaven accentuates His Sovereign rule , for, as Nebuchadnezzar found out the hard way, “the heavens do rule” (4:26). There is a higher realm, a loftier domain, where restriction is not known, and all wisdom and power reside. There is a throne that has dominion over the affairs of earth, and Daniel now points the king to the mighty God who sits there, presiding over the affairs of men.

Repeatedly, God has associated Himself with “heaven” – far above the access of nature.

- “The LORD He is God in heaven above” (Deut 4:39).
- “For the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above” (Josh 2:11).
- “And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven ?” (2 Chron 20:6).
- “For God is in heaven ” (Eccl 5:2).
- “Your Father which is in heaven ” (Matt 5:16).
- “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven ” (Matt 5:45).
- “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt 5:48).

- “Our Father which art in heaven ” (Matt 6:9).
- “How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?” (Matt 7:11).
- “But he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven ” (Matt 7:21).

As used in our text, “heaven” is not a geographical term. Technically, it is not describing where God is located. Rather, it is accenting His dominion by contrasting the higher with the lower, and the eternal with the temporal.

In other words, if the king was ever going to know what he dreamed and what it meant, the answer was going to have to come from above the earth. Explanations would have to come from the One who gave the dream, and He is in heaven. It simply could not be found in the natural realm.

An Application

One of the telling signs of a godly generation is its heavenly mindedness. Unlike the hog, whose eyes are slanted downward, those who live by faith have an upward posture. Their eyes are focused on the heavenly realms, and affection is fixed on “things above, and not in things on the earth” (Col 3:2). How often we read the words, “lift up your eyes” (Isa 40:26; 51:6; Jer 13:20; John 4:34), and “look up” (Psa 5:3; Lk 21:28). The ability of people to lift up their eyes and “look toward the hills,” knowing that their “help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth” (Psa 121:1-2), confirms they are trusting in the Lord and living by faith.

One of the solid confirmations of a heart that is alienated from God is a consistent tendency to view things from an earthly perspective. Faith does not come from this world, and it certainly does not fasten our hearts to it. Men and women of faith always resort to God. That is one of the loud messages of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. A worldly-minded church is a contradiction of terms, like saying an angelic demon, or wicked good man.

The modern church has been greatly debilitated by its earthly emphasis. Whatever makes this world large, by that very circumstance, makes heaven small. Whatever accents human experience diminishes blessings from heaven. Anything that makes circumstance the most prominent matter, by that very prominence causes the awareness of the God of heaven to recede into the background of all thought and consciousness.

HE REVEALS SECRETS

“ . . . that revealeth secrets . . . ” Because this point has been made in a previous lesson, it will

suffice to say only the following. In Scripture, this kind of secret is one that can only be revealed by the God of heaven. It is not possible to know such things apart from revelation.

The point Daniel is making here is that the gods of Babylon could not make this secret known. Nebuchadnezzar had “gods.” In fact, certain people referred to them when pointing out that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not bow to a golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar. “These men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods ” (3:12). When confronting these three young men, the king asked, “do not ye serve my gods?” (3:14). Where were Nebuchadnezzar’s gods during his quest to know what he dreamed? They were powerless to reveal the secret . “But,” Daniel affirms , “there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets.”

Thus, while the attention of both Arioch and Nebuchadnezzar has been turned to Daniel, he promptly puts the focus upon the God of heaven.

THE LATTER DAYS

“ . . . and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.” What a remarkable proclamation! Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of all earthly potentates, was chosen by God to learn of things that would happen in “the end of days.” NRSV

Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Hosea spoke of “the latter days.” (Num 24:14; Deut 4:30; 31:29; Jer 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 38:16; Dan 2:28; 10:14; Hos 3:5). The word translated “latter” is also translated “last” in the KJV (Gen 49:1; Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1). It is always associated with some epoch to be initiated or controlled by the Almighty. The New Covenant Scriptures use the term “last days” (Acts 2:17; 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 1:2; James 5:3), and “latter times” (1 Tim 4:1).

The Significance of the Expression

There are two perspectives to these expressions. First, the emphasis is on the closing period of time. Second, there is an accent on what God will do during that closing period of time.

From a general point of view, the final period of time is “the day of salvation” – the time from the exaltation of Christ until the end of the world. This is the sense in which “last days” is used in the first chapter of Hebrews. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb 1:1-2). Peter announced the commencement of this period on the day of Pentecost. “And it shall come to pass in the last days , saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17).

These words are also used to denote the conclusion of those “last days,” or the final period of time. Thus, during the “last days” of Hebrews 1, Paul wrote, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Tim 3:1). In this text Paul revealed the introduction of corrupt religion on an unparalleled scale. Religious people would have “a form of godliness that denied the power thereof.” Its powerlessness was made known by the lack of a change in the character of its adherents (vs 2-5). In stark contrast with the declaration of a new birth, a new heart, and a new creation, the religion of the people would leave them unchanged. Such times, the Spirit affirmed, would be “perilous.” Peter spoke of the same period of time. “Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2 Pet 3:3-4). ” We are living in such times.

Paul also alluded to this period in his letter to the Thessalonians. “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thess 2:3). While this might stir our curiosity, this is not the place to further delineate this time. The point is that there is infinitely more to life than the here and the now! This text will be considered when we review the eighth chapter of Daniel.

Again, James, using the same words, wrote with the termination of all things in mind. “Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days ” (James 5:3).

In This Text

In this text, God will make known to the king the end of his empire. He will also unveil the end of all empires, and the commencement of an unending rule.

The point to be seen is that the purposes of God are far reaching, and that times and epochs have a conclusion. Now, Daniel affirms, the God of heaven has made known to the king things relating to the closing period of history. He is not doing this for Nebuchadnezzar’s sake alone, but for the ages to come, including ours.

An Observation

Knowing “the last days” is a hotly contested subject in religious circles, a thought has occurred to me. It is how unlike man God really is. Men draw back from this subject, but God is forward to speak of it, even to a heathen king who worships other gods. Everything is not static, remaining the same, during this day of salvation. Jesus did not induct a period during which no significant changes would be made. This is not a time in which everything has been locked into a certain mode. But there are those who imagine this is the case. King Nebuchadnezzar probably viewed his own kingdom in this way, thinking nothing was going to change. But he was wrong!

The people of God are not to imagine that nothing looms on the horizon of time. Woe to the

person who thinks either the best or the worst has already happened! Such a person has set himself up for grief and a serious test of his faith. If God humbles Himself to make the future known to us, we do well to give Him our hearts and ears. It is to our profit to do so, and to our eternal detriment to fail to do so.

HE THAT REVEALS SECRETS

“ 28b Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; 29 As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass.” Daniel is carefully presenting the dream and its interpretation. He will do it in a such a manner as brings glory to God and subdues the pride of man . He will leave Nebuchadnezzar thinking more about the God who gave the dream than about the dream itself. This is a form of spiritual mastery that characterizes all inspired men and women. They bear a message that, if believed, leaves the individual with a proper focus.

Leaving Proper Impressions

In the “church” world, there are countless messages and emphases that leave the people with barely a thought of the God of heaven. After ingesting such messages people can leave the presence of the speaker thinking about things mundane, and even profane. However, no such reaction is found in Scripture of those who gave heed to inspired messages. Those who listened to Moses, taking in his words, were left thinking of the Lord and their relationship to Him. The same may be said of all of the Prophets, John the Baptist, the Apostles, and others.

The premier example is the Lord Jesus Himself. His message was so focused that people asked Him things no one of record was ever before asked.

- “Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” (Mark 10:17) .
- “Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us” (John 14:8).
- “Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?” (Matt 17:10).
- “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?” (Matt 22:35) .
- “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matt 24:3).

These were questions the people asked no other teacher. Why? Because the focus of Christ's teaching was different, as well as the manner in which He taught. His words left people thinking about God, eternal life, the end of the world, and the world to come.

The same was true of Apostolic teaching. After hearing Peter and John preach, their listeners concluded they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).

There is a consistency of this manner anywhere and everywhere someone spoke in behalf of the God of heaven. When the Scribes and Pharisees taught, the people thought upon traditions and rules. When Jesus taught, they thought of eternal life, forgiveness, and the God of heaven doing something for their good.

The Relevance

On the surface, it may appear as though this has very little to do with the book of Daniel. However, this is a Kingdom manner that will be reflected in Daniel's words to the king. His words will have an accent and focus that yield benefit if the king will listen to them. They will help him prepare for the future, as well as understand the past and the present as well.

VISIONS UPON THY BED

“Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these . . .” Not only did the dream of the king come to him from the God of heaven, Daniel proclaims that the thoughts experienced while upon his bed were known by the Lord. Daniel speaks as though he was standing in the king's bedchamber, reading and comprehending his very thoughts – thoughts the king himself could not remember.

A Supposition

Nebuchadnezzar was prone to think of his own works. Later, having learned little from the occasion we are now covering, he will survey his kingdom with pride and say, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?” (4:30). I suggest that he had probably been having similar thoughts when he had his troubling dreams. It is as though the God of heaven responded to his vain thoughts. Whereas he might well have pondered who would take the kingdom after him, and how the glory of it would continue, God will tell him it is going to come crashing down. The Lord would start where Nebuchadnezzar's thoughts faded into meaningless, and make known things to come.

The Lord Tries and Searches Hearts

The Lord has revealed that He “trieth the hearts and reins” (Psa 7:9; Prov 17:3). Acutely aware of this, Paul once acknowledged he spoke “not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (1

Thess 2:4). David knew, and now Daniel will confirm to the king , “the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts” (1 Chron 28:9).

If you read the Scriptures with this in mind, you will find it surfacing nearly every time God is dealing with a person. Divine searching of the heart is the mother of conviction and the father of persuasion. It contributes to sobriety, generates hope in the believing heart, and fear in the doubter.

THOUGHTS CAME INTO THY MIND

“ As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed . . . ” It is written , “The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity” (Psa 94:11). From one perspective, in Nebuchadnezzar’s case they were not vain because of their substance, but because he could not recall them. They will be of no profit whatsoever to him until someone to whom God has revealed the secret communicates it to him. From another perspective, as I have already suggested, Nebuchadnezzar might have began contemplating the future on his own, with God taking control of his thoughts and taking the matter further. In that case, his personal thoughts were vanity. Only the thoughts God put into his mind were profitable, and that only if a man of God unveiled them to the king.

The whole purpose of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was to prepare him for what Daniel would say. If the prophet had divulged the Divine agenda without this preparatory work of God, the king would have found it more difficult to receive. But the troublesome dreams had cultured his heart for a word from God. By referring to the king’s thoughts as he lay upon his bed, Daniel at once has the attention of the king. He will anxiously hear every word that is told him.

WHAT SHOULD COME TO PASS HEREAFTER

“ . . . what should come to pass hereafter . . . ” Like the disciples, it was given to Nebuchadnezzar to know these things. As it is written, “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables” (Mk 4:11). In Nebuchadnezzar’s case, the mysteries were not wrapped in a parable, but in a dream. The king, therefore, experienced both sides of the equation. First, he received something he could not recall or decipher with his own “thoughts.” Second, through Daniel,. It was given to him to learn more precisely about the future. No longer will he have to speculate about the future or attempt to recall his dream.

In the Divine economy it is God Himself who makes the determinations, then chooses those to whom He will make them known. For some, this appears to be too fatalistic. However, there is no need for men to think in this way, for the Lord has spoken abundantly on the matter.

From the very beginning, Divine determination played a key role in the spread and propagation of humanity. As it is written, “From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live ” NIV (Acts 17:26). When the various nations were established in the world, certain boundaries were

placed by the Almighty. “When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, He set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people, Jacob His allotted inheritance” (Deut 32:8-9).

A number of Scriptures confirm to our hearts the role of God among men, their kingdoms, and their inheritance.

- “And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen , in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth” (Ex 8:22).
- “And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot for a possession” (Deut 2:19).
- “Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?” (2 Chron 20:7).
- “I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto Me ” (Jer 27:5).
- “But the LORD is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation ” (Jer 10:10).

The hand of God is upon the affairs of men! As Governor among the nations (Psa 22:28), He orchestrates what is occurring among them. In blessing the Lord, Daniel has acknowledged he sees that God removes and sets up kings. He changes times and seasons. He does not consult with men in order to do this, nor can men nullify His determinations. If what God determined could, in fact, be altered, there could be no such thing as prophecy, and Daniel’s words would be pointless. How could God promise to “bless all nations” (Gen 12:3; Gal 3:8) if His will was subject to change because of men?

The Lord shouts out to the doubter and the skeptic . “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning , and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure : Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth My counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it ” (Isa 46:9-11).

If a person fails to see God as He has declared Himself to be, the prophecies of Daniel will seem unimportant. A shallow significance be attached to them, and they will be sifted through history instead

of the Word of God to obtain some meaning from them. Scripture is NOT an analysis of history, but a declaration of the works and will of the Lord. Unless history is seen as HIS-story it will have no lasting significance to us. Further, even if we do perceive the shifting of political powers as the work of God, unless we see such maneuverings as related to His “eternal purpose,” they will seem to have no bearing upon our life.

The general lack of emphasis upon this aspect of God demands that we say something about it – especially when dealing with a text like this.

Divine Appointments

There is such a thing as Divine appointments. At the very threshold of human history, Eve knew this. When she gave birth to Seth, who was begotten in Adam’s own image, she said, “God . . . hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew” (Gen 4:25). Isaac was born at an “appointed time” (Gen 18:14). The Lord “appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom” (2 Sam 17:14). On one occasion the Lord “appointed” a pestilence that killed seventy thousand Israelites (2 Sam 24:25). What God purposes surely comes to pass. As the Lord Himself affirms, “So shall it stand” (Isa 14:24).

What God has made known to the king is not a possibility, but things that “shall come to pass.” Other versions read “what will be,” NKJV “what will take place,” NASB “what is going to happen,” NIV and “that which is to be.” YLT These are not the declaration of what men will do, but what the Lord God will accomplish. Daniel is not making known things that God, in His omniscience, has seen in the future, but things the Lord has determined for the future.

This should not be difficult for us to receive. Daniel has blessed the Lord because he has seen that God changes times and seasons, removes kings, and sets up kings. All of these are Divine interventions – an alteration of things as they are.

The Lord can, and does , “bring to nought things that are” (1 Cor 1:28). He can “ cause the arrongancy of the proud to cease” (Isa 13:11), and “ cause ” His people to “be removed from all kingdoms of the earth” (Jer 15:4). He declares, “know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is The LORD” (Jer 16:21). He can take a world that has been “filled with violence” (Gen 6:11) and cause it to be “filled with the knowledge of the Lord” (Heb 2:14).

The God of heaven is making known the things He Himself will do. Those charged with teaching and leading the people of God must often remind them of their God. It is as true with you as it was with Belshazzar. He is the God “who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways” NKJV (Dan 5:23). Faith shouts out to the Lord, “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all . In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all ” NKJV (1 Chron 29:11-12).

Only a God like this can unveil the future with certainty! What is more, this is the God to whom we have been “reconciled” (Col 1:21). This is the God with whom we now “have peace” (Rom 5:1). This is the One who is working all things together for our good (Rom 8:28). Child of God, His eye is upon you, and His ear is open to your cry (Psa 34:15). It is ever true, “all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Dan 4:35).

SECRETS MADE KNOWN

“ . . . and He that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass.” Again, Daniel affirms what the Lord God has done. This is the God who alone can reveal the secrets He has “purposed in Himself” (Eph 1:9). These are His plans – things He has determined to do in the earth for His glory. He can divulge them with all the hosts of darkness listening, and they will not be able to stop them from occurring. These are sure things, cast in the stone of Divine purpose. They will come to pass. How gracious the Lord is to make His purposes known to the sons of men!

Glad day when you come to know what God has purposed! Just as Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar, this knowledge did not come to you by flesh and blood. God, who knows and has access to your heart, has made them known.

IT HAS BEEN REVEALED TO ME

“ 30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.” Because this circumstance may tend to draw undue attention to Daniel himself, he now humbles himself under the mighty hand of God, that God may exalt him in due time (1 Pet 5:6). When the truth is known, it does not contribute to pride or a fleshly sense of self-worth . “The knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4) is humbling as well as satisfying. It is quick to point the listener to the “God of truth” (Deut 32:4).

There is another thing to be seen here. Daniel has boldly declared that God alone reveals secrets. Yet, he is going to tell the secret to the king. Perhaps Nebuchadnezzar will question how this can be, since God alone is the revealer. Foreseeing this, Daniel wisely explains the Source of his knowledge, unwilling to rob God of His glory. He sends all of the glory back to God, taking none for himself. He knows that if God had not made the matter known to him, he would have been just as ignorant as Nebuchadnezzar about it.

AS FOR ME

“But as for me . . .” Daniel has reminded the king that what he demanded could not be given to him by “the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers.” As for the king himself, he cannot even remember what he has dreamed, much less decipher the meaning of the dream. Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard can add nothing to the matter, nor can Melzar, who had the charge of the four children of Judah during their training. However, a distinction has been made in Babylon. There is one man – one solitary man – who is able to declare precisely what was dreamed, and exactly what it means.

Daniel knows full well that he has been endowed with special wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. In an open comparison, he had proved “ten times better” in his astute answers than all the wise men of Babylon. Perhaps this might lead the king to conclude Daniel’s intellectual superiority and quick learning ability had enabled him to uncover the mystery. Perhaps his expertise in the language and literature of the Babylonians has qualified him to give the answer the king demanded. In order to remove all doubt in this matter, Daniel now shines the light upon himself. He delivers a true picture of the situation.

NOT FOR ANY WISDOM

“ . . . this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living . . .” Other versions read “this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man,” NASB “this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men,” NIV and “This mystery has been revealed to me, not that I am wiser than anyone else.” NJB

One might argue that Daniel was, indeed, wiser than other living men. After all, he had been shown to be “ten times better” in his intellectual grasp of things. And, Daniel is not denying this is the case. He is not saying he has no more wisdom than anyone else, for God had given him wisdom above his peers. He had also given him the ability to be quick in learning. He stood out among the captives of Judah, and he stood out among the wise men of Babylon. Daniel does not deny this.

However, in the king’s matter, all of Daniel’s wisdom proved wholly inadequate. He knew no more about the dream and its meaning than Nebuchadnezzar or any of the other Babylonian wise men. Daniel knew this all too well. He had to seek mercies from the Lord to obtain understanding – and the Lord gave it to him.

However, the heavenly Father did not show Daniel the dream and its meaning because he was smarter than all others. It was not because he had a more keen mind, or was quick to comprehend. It was not because Daniel could put the facts together better, or had a more logical mind, or was an expert in hermeneutics. It was not because he knew the original language of Babylon, or had achieved a place

of prominence among thinkers. Rather, it was because he asked for wisdom. He besought the mercies of the Lord, which could open the matter to him.

Something to be Learned

There is a dimension of knowledge that extends beyond the circumference of ordinary, and even extraordinary, wisdom. There are things to be known that do not depend upon intellectual acumen. There is truth to be comprehended that does not rely upon human logic and interpretation. There are matters that need to be understood that do not come through consensus, group dialog, and discussion groups. There is a realm of learning where worldly credentials and expertise have no value whatsoever.

This is why we are told, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:16). Other versions read , “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised,” NASB and “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

What can be traced back to Adam is “natural.” However refined it might be, it cannot enable a person to comprehend the things of God. That consideration is a fundamental one. The comprehension of it will clear up many matters that otherwise tend to be confusing.

If Solomon, in all of his wisdom, had been in Nebuchadnezzar’s court, he could have provided no more insight on the matter than the magicians or astrologers. Even the lesser Socrates and Plato, should they have been in the king’s court, would have been condemned to death with the rest of the wise men.

If the king had demanded only things that could be known in the wisdom of this world, Daniel would never have risen to the prominence he would later enjoy. In this regard, he bore great similarity to Joseph. Until something arose that demanded wisdom and understanding no one else had, Joseph remained in prison. But the very day what he had received from the Lord was perceived as necessary, he was brought from the dungeon of isolation.

By the same token, at the very time Nebuchadnezzar needed something on one else could supply, Daniel rose to prominence. He had access to something that was not available to the wise men of the Babylonian empire. In fact, not even Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo had received these things. Even though there is no respect of persons with God, all of His children do not receive exactly the same thing. Neither, indeed, do they all occupy the same office.

A Growing Crisis

Currently, there is a crisis of spiritual knowledge in the church. The Joseph's and Daniel's are in isolation because there is no demand for them. Those who traffic in spiritual realities and have an understanding of the ways of God are keeping sheep on the back side of the desert like Moses. Their spiritual expertise simply is not perceived as a need – at least not in normal times, or within the institutional agenda.

The current popularity of problem solving, wit, organizational skills, statistical expertise, and motivational knowledge confirm the modern church is not asking for much. If a person has an impressive list of credentials – like the wise men of Babylon – they are offered key positions in the church and its subsidiary organizations.

There are whole bodies of Christian people who have never heard an insightful exposition of the Scriptures, or the opening up of things pertaining to life and godliness. They are like the citizens of Babylon who had a cluster of seeming wise men. Yet, when issues arise that have to do with knowing God, discerning the times, or gaining the victory over the world, their wise men have to admit they are ignorant, having no knowledge.

The result of this crisis is that God is becoming more and more unknown within the professed church. For the most part, the people are Scripturally illiterate, and cannot handle aright the Word of God (2 Tim 2:15).

Of course, God will, in His own time, so orchestrate the circumstances as to confirm the impotence of worldly wisdom. Some of His people have already experienced this, and are finding there is no substitute for the knowledge of God – for fellowship with Him, access to the throne of all grace, and asking for wisdom. If you are a person who delights in the knowledge of the Lord, yet lack opportunity, keep the faith. Your time will come. God will open a door for you into which no one else will be able to enter.

The Fact of the Matter

The fact of the matter is that God has repudiated the wisdom of this world. He has locked the things of God so they cannot be accessed by that means. That is precisely the declaration of First Corinthians 1:19-21. “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him.” NIV

The Kingdom of God is so ordered that what God reveals cannot be deciphered by the world's wisdom. What He made known to Nebuchadnezzar could not be comprehended by Nebuchadnezzar himself. It could not be discerned by his wise men. That is the manner of the Kingdom, and there is no

way to violate that manner and yet obtain an understanding of the truth.

I have known highly educated men who confessed the things of God were beyond them. In humility, like David, some of them have sought understanding from the Lord (Psa 119:34,73,125, 144,169). Also, like David, they were not disappointed.

An Explanation

I understand that it may appear I am just a disgruntled old man, but that is not the case at all. I carry a burden for the people who are deprived of the knowledge of God, yet flooded with the wisdom of men. I know by experience that the world's wisdom generates a spiritual fog that obscures the things of God. I pray for the day when men and women of God will be valued in strict accord with what they have received from God, not men.

BUT FOR THEIR SAKES

“ . . . but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king . . . ” Other versions read “for our sakes,” NKJV “but for the purpose of,” NASB “but so that you ,” NIV “but in order that,” NRSV “but for this sole purpose ,” NJB “but because God wanted you to understand,” NLT and “but in order that the sense of the dream may be made clear.” BBE

Here, the various versions tend to muddy the water. Some read as though the reason God revealed the dream to Daniel was in order that Nebuchadnezzar might know. Others read as though the vision and its interpretation were themselves the objective – that is, they were given so that they might be understood. KJV/NASB/NRSV The NKJV gives the sense that the purpose for the dreams involved the benefit of both Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar.

Actually, all of these perspectives are involved in the text. So far as Nebuchadnezzar was concerned, God did not give the dream to him in vain. It was given in order that it might ultimately be understood. From Daniel's perspective, it was given in order that Daniel might know the dream and its interpretation, becoming a co-laborer with God in making it known. From the standpoint of the dream itself, it was a Divine prelude to revelation – the means God chose to unfold matters pertaining to the future.

Driven By A Divine Agenda

Daniel is making known to the king that his demand is NOT why he will receive the interpretation. Revelation is not given because of human curiosity, but because of the purpose of God. It was God Himself who initiated the procedure leading to the explanation of the dream, NOT the demand of Nebuchadnezzar.

A Principle to be Seen

There is a marvelous principle to be seen in this text. God always introduces men to revelation in order that they might appropriate its meaning. What God gives or shows to men is not intended to remain a mystery, even though it may be secret at the first. Those who see faint glimmers of truth are to pursue them, for they were granted to them to be understood. Further, introductions and glimmers are never ends of themselves, whether in the form of dreams, intuitions, or Scriptural knowledge. Such things are like a hand, beckoning men to pursue understanding, and engage in a quest to know the Word and will of the Lord. Many a soul has come short of knowing the will of the Lord simply because they did not pursue what the Lord showed to them.

It should trouble our hearts when the things of God are a mystery to us. That is why David prayed so fervently for understanding. He knew what the Law said. He was familiar with the Testimonies of the Lord. Yet, he sensed there was more to them than he was seeing. Thus he prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psa 119:18). He saw the Word of God as a deep ocean, whose depths could be plumbed. It was like a deep well in which cool and refreshing water could be had – but they were located in deep places. Thus he confessed, "Thy thoughts are very deep" (Psa 92:5).

It is written that the Spirit "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor 2:10). And why does the Spirit search them? It is certainly not for Himself, for He is not in the learning mode. The Spirit is in the teaching and enlightening mode. He searches the deep things of God to give them to the redeemed. That, of course, is precisely the meaning of that verse. "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

An Example

Child of God, what God reveals is intended to be understood. That is -precisely why it is given. Some believers are tempted to lay aside certain books of the Bible because they appear to be too difficult for them to understand. Take, for example, the book of Revelation. There is a blessing bestowed upon those who give attention to it. "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near" NIV (Rev 1:3).

Notice, the blessing is not to the one who understands, but the one who reads. It is not on the one who comprehends, but on the one who hears. It is not on the one who can fully expound the book, but the one who takes it into his heart, pondering and thinking upon it. It is not that reading, hearing, and pondering are themselves the blessing. Rather, it is in these involvements that God begins to unfold things what would otherwise remain secret. Like all things God makes known, the Scriptures are intended to be understood. As you apply yourself to them, living by every Word of God, you will find this is the truth.

KNOWING THE THOUGHTS OF THY HEART

“. . . and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.” Other versions read, “that you may understand the thoughts of your mind,” NASB and “that you may understand what went through your mind.” NIV

The phrase “the thoughts of thy heart” is not to be taken in the same sense as Simeon’s prophecy to Mary: “that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed” (Lk 2:35). There, an expose of the conscious thoughts of the heart was intended. The cause for the flood was that the thoughts of man’s heart “was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). God, we are told, searches and understands “understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts” (1 Chron 28:9). David, discerning that there was more to his thoughts than he fully grasped cried out, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts” (Psa 139:23). These were all thoughts that had their genesis with men themselves. They were “their” thoughts.

The thoughts of reference in our text were in Nebuchadnezzar’s mind, but they were not his thoughts. They were God’s thoughts, brought to him in the form of a dream. The king did not conjure up these thoughts, they were put into his mind.

David spoke of God sending thoughts to him. He saw them as very numerous, even beyond count. “Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered” (Psa 40:5). They were exceedingly precious to David. “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!” (Psa 139:17). That was because he was able to ponder them.

But it was different with Nebuchadnezzar. He could not even remember the thoughts of his heart. That did not mean they were pointless, or that they should be forgotten. Daniel declares he was given their meaning so the king could know what God had put in his heart. See, what God gives is to be known. It is not to be treated as something that is neither necessary nor satisfying. Do not ignore or treat lightly holy thoughts that come into your mind. Consider them a stewardship to be handled with zeal and interest.

CONCLUSION

As the book of Daniel progresses we are beholding the working of the Lord. Masterfully he weaves the tapestry of life with threads that do not normally mingle together. A Hebrew, an executioner, a king, and a dream are included. The dark threads are selected of a king’s anger, wise men who obtained their wisdom from nether sources, and a mass execution. Throw in the light thread of

youth, and the gray thread of ignorance. All of it does not appear to be of any great potential.

However, in the hands of the Lord of glory a wondrous work will be accomplished. The mind of an executioner will be changed. The hearts of four children of Judah will be challenged and assured. A young Jewish man will receive something no one in all of the empire possessed. A king's wrath will be assuaged. And a message will be delivered that will feed and nourish the saints of God for ages to come. A Divine purpose will be unfolded that was never before made known. It is no marvel that the Lord's doings are called "wonderful works," and that they are "marvelous in our eyes" (Psa 40:5; 118:23).

Child of God, what is there in your life that appears to be in disarray? What is there that you do not understand, or that looks hopeless to you. Do not imagine for a moment that God cannot bring a blessing out of it all. God is your Master, not circumstance! Eternity is your destiny, not time. Eternal life has been determined for you, not everlasting misery. Is it not written, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him" (1 Thess 5:9-10).

Lift up your head and be of good cheer. You have been raised to a higher level than Daniel. Daniel was not greater than John the Baptist, yet Jesus said this of John. "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt 11:11). It is certainly not that any of us are greater than Daniel or John the Baptist on a personal level. In a sense, they were giants and we are midgets. The difference is that they were standing in a valley, and in Christ we are standing on a mountain. You can expect God to honor the position in which He has placed you!

The Prophecy of Daniel

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S FIRST DREAM IS INTERPRETED

Lesson #9

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of God for this world will now be declared. God has made known to Nebuchadnezzar what He has purposed to do in the world. It is an objective that involves the kingdoms of this world, together with their rulers. However, even though God has made His purpose known, it is not possible for the wisdom of men to decipher it. In fact, the king cannot even remember it. The faculties of the human mind are not adequate, of themselves, to hold on to the things of God. In the case before us, an unforgettable dream is forgotten. It is buried in the recesses of the mind, and cannot be recalled, even though the dream has been given repeatedly. Although the dream was troubling, it still cannot be remembered. Nothing in the king's surroundings can stir him to recall his dream – the scope of it, the subject of it, or even the slightest detail of it. The dream was too large for his small mind to profitably contain it. It was too minute for his disciplined powers of reason to survey.

Even though he has threatened the most astute wise men of his empire with death, they have not been able to present any facet of the dream. They have not even been able to concoct a lie about it. Here is something from heaven, and it will require someone in touch with heaven to render any assistance to the king. Nebuchadnezzar was sought repeatedly for the dream to be known. He has struggled to recall something about it over an extended period, and has not discovered so much as a minuscule mote of information. His wise men have also exhausted their reasoning.

None of their diabolical resources could yield anything. Their otherwise productive minds proved sterile in this matter. Yet, in one single night, Daniel has gained knowledge of the dream itself, and the interpretation of it as well. The method Daniel chose to obtain this wisdom was not conventional for the world, but was standard for the kingdom of God. He prayed for wisdom.

THE WORLD'S WISDOM IS VAIN

Thus God has “made foolish the wisdom of this world” (1 Cor 1:20). He has, through the circumstances of this chapter, cried out, “Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age?” NIV (1 Cor 1:20a), and not a solitary reply was arisen from the sons of men. Truly, “there is a God in heaven” (2:28), and He “makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense” NIV (Isa 44:25).

The Age of Reason

In reviewing this text, we must allow its light to illuminate our own path. The wisdom of this world has not grown better with age. The world may boast of the “Age of Reason,” but it has yielded a miserable basket of fruit. This age was spawned by godless thinkers in the eighteenth century. Historians have called it “The Enlightenment.”

The first notions of evolution were introduced during this period by Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis. Later, in the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin would popularize this bit of intellectual vagary. Psychology was also birthed during the aftermath of the “Enlightenment.” It was brought into prominence under the influence of Sigmund Freud, the first person who purported to scientifically explore “the human unconscious mind.”

Higher Criticism

Not to be forgotten is another wretched offspring of “The Enlightenment.” It is “Higher Criticism,” also called “Biblical Criticism.” This is man’s analysis of the Scriptural text. It employs the analysis of various manuscripts, and by that means boldly announces what parts of the Bible are valid, as well as those it deems to be spurious. More recent versions of Scripture provide various footnotes that have resulted from this “criticism” of the Biblical text. A contemporary version of the Bible will have footnotes that refer to “the best and oldest manuscripts,” etc. These are provided as an explanation

for text alteration.

Without being unduly distracted by these considerations, there is a point to be made. During the time of our text, the failure of wise men to provide a solution meant they would die. King Nebuchadnezzar had no time for bantering opinions back and forth. What he wanted to know was too important for him to field various persuasions and views from his wise men. Nor, indeed, would it have been in place for some of his counsellors to view his dream with Babylonian higher criticism. Some might have said it was only the result of indigestion or worry, and therefore should not be regarded as important. Others might have conjectured that with the passing of time, the whole matter was becoming too vague. Any later translation of the dream might prove to be too distant from the original occurrence. Still others might have insisted on an infallible dream hermeneutic – a logical method of interpreting the forgotten dream.

Of course, all of this is obviously foolish. However, this is all too often the approach men take to the Word of God. We must learn from this account how utterly inappropriate such approaches really are. God chose to make His will known to the most illustrious ruler the world has ever known. He did it during the dominance of the most glorious kingdom among men. In those circumstances, He made known the impotence of the wisdom of this world. We should require no more evidence of the poverty of worldly wisdom than that – even though the history of the world is Divinely strewn with such evidences. Woe to that person who attempts to blend the truth of God with the wisdom of this world. It is an attempt to merge Divine wisdom and foolishness, light and darkness, and truth with speculation. It simply cannot be done.

CONFIRMED IN OUR TEXT

The vanity of worldly wisdom is loudly proclaimed in our text. If God had not revealed “the secret” and “the king’s matter,” it never would have been known. The world would have passed away, and it all would have remained a secret. Ample opportunity was given to the wisest men of this world to discover the king’s dream and its meaning. Strong incentives were declared to assist them to engage in a hearty effort to do so. However, all of their efforts were vain.

It is a miserable “science, falsely so called,” (1 Tim 6:20) that attempts to critique what has been revealed by God. This, to me, is man’s foolish on parade, wearing the mask of intellect, and shouting its own praises. What God makes known is to be believed and proclaimed. Those who expend their energies to declare what the Lord has revealed, like Daniel, will be given to know what it means. Those who attempt to evaluate whether or not it is true will either be thrown into confusion, or brought to see that God has “made foolish the wisdom of this world.”

In Daniel we see that faith is the principle means of appropriating the wisdom of God, and an understanding of what He has made known. Faith obtains the most from God, and probes the deepest into His mysteries.

THE GREAT IMAGE

“ 31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. 32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.”

Daniel will first declare the dream itself – the dream the king could by no means remember. God, who had hidden the dream from the king, will cause him to recognize that a true prophet is standing before him. No part of the dream itself will be left out, and no part of it will be obscure. The precision with which Daniel speaks will assure the heart and mind of the king that the meaning he gives is also true.

IMPRESSIVE IN APPEARANCE

“Thou, O king, sawest . . .”

Intense Interest

There is a certain boldness evident in Daniel’s words. He does not venture an opinion, or suggest what the king might possibly have seen. Something had caught the attention of the king – something in his dream. Other visions read , “You, O king, were watching ,” NKJV “You, O king, were looking ,” NASB “You looked, O king.” NIV This was not an ordinary dream, but one that had captured the attention of the king. He surveyed the vision God gave to him, looking upon it with interest and intrigue. His consideration was extended, and not brief. Thus Daniel reveals the attitude of the king – how he had regarded the dream. Like the angels, he desired to “look into” what God had made known (1 Pet 1:12). The idea of the text is that Nebuchadnezzar was not passive in his dream, as though something was simply coming to him. He was attempting to go to what he saw, scanning the vision and looking for its details. Daniel will now make known the details that had so intrigued the king, but which he could by no means remember.

A Great Image

“ . . . and behold a great image . . .” Other versions read, “a single great statue,” NASB “a large statue,” NIV “huge,” NLT and “very large.” NAB The king had not seen a body of people, or a panoramic view of nature. He had seen an exceedingly large statue – the sculpture of a man. It was very large, pulling the attention of the king to itself, rather than its surroundings, being of gigantic dimensions.

Excellent in Brightness

“ . . . This great image, whose brightness was excellent, Other versions read, “whose splendor was excellent,” NKJV “of extraordinary splendor,” NASB and “dazzling statue, awesome in appearance.” NIV The impressive image glistened, and was dazzling in appearance. It was not only large, but awesome in its details. From the standpoint of a man, it was an obvious piece of excellent workmanship. There was a certain beauty and majesty that characterized the statue. The reason for this remarkable brightness will be seen when the various materials of the statue are described. At the first, everything about this image is impressive.

It Stood Before Thee

“ . . . stood before thee . . . ” The image was brought to the king – he did not go to it. It became obvious that God was not showing the king something that was disassociated from his own person. It stood before him , in full view, so he could survey its intricacies.

In this vivid description, you must remember that this is what the king saw. At this point, Daniel is describing the experience of the king. This is not yet the interpretation. Many of us have heard this account from our youth, and have never been able to forget it. Yet, Nebuchadnezzar, who personally had the dream, and entered zealously into it, could not remember a single detail of that remarkable dream.

The Form Was Terrible

“ . . . and the form thereof was terrible.” Other versions read “its form was awesome,” NKJV “its appearance was frightening,” NRSV “terrifying in appearance,” NAB and “its form sent fear into the heart.” BBE

The word “terrible” means the image was so large and formidable that it made Nebuchadnezzar afraid. He saw an imposing image that dwarfed his own person. The statue was dominating, and demanded the king’s attention. The terror that fell upon him did not make him try and get away from the statute, but demanded that he peruse it, giving it his whole attention. The sudden appearance of this vast statue – standing before the king by Divine appointment – seized his attention. He did not dare to ignore it.

IMPRESSIVE IN ITS BEGINNING

“This image's head was of fine gold ...” Keep in mind, Daniel is now recounting what the king had already seen in a dream, but was not able to recall. This part of Daniel’s presentation is not new, but will confirm the validity of the revealed interpretation he will also give to the king.

The image was that of a man, and obviously stands for something that has been, and will be, accomplished by man. The head of this massive statue was made of “fine gold” – that is, pure and

unalloyed gold. Other versions read “pure gold,” NIV “the best gold,” BBE and “good gold.” YLT Scripture mentions “fine gold” several times, referring to the purest and very best gold.

When the tabernacle was build, much of its furniture was overlaid with “pure gold” (Ex 25:11,24; 30:3). The mercy seat, covering the ark of the covenant, was made of “pure gold” – about 3-3/4 by 2-1/4 feet in size (Ex 25:17). The dishes, spoons, covers, and bowls associated with the table of showbread, were also made of “pure gold” (Ex 25:29). The candlestick inside the holy place was made of one solid piece of “pure gold” (Ex 25:31-36), as well as its “tongs and snuffdishes” (Ex 25:38). But these, and other tabernacle items, were very small compared to what Nebuchadnezzar saw.

When Solomon built the temple, he made its main room “with cypress wood and overlaid it with fine gold” NASB (2 Chron 3:5). He also made the “Most Holy Place,” thirty feet by thirty feet (twenty cubits), and overlaid it with “about twenty-three tons of pure (fine) gold” NLT (2 Chron 23:8). But Nebuchadnezzar did not see a statue with a head “overlaid” with fine gold. Rather the whole head of this massive statue was a solid mass of “fine gold” – something beyond human comprehension.

We will see that this stands for an unusually impressive beginning.

A NOTICEABLE DECLINE IN VALUE

“ . . . his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.” From the head down, there is a noticeable decline in the statue’s value and strength – from the head, downward to the feet. The head stands for the beginning of this image, and the feet stand for its final representation. A special point will be made of this in the interpretation of the dream.

Breast and Arms

“ . . . his breast and his arms of silver . . . ” This part of the body, extending from the base of the neck to the abdomen, is second in importance, the head being first. It is the part of the body containing most of the vital organs. Not only is this part of the statue inferior to the head in function, it is also inferior in value, being made of silver.

Silver is surely a precious metal, but not as precious as gold. It was also a prominent metal in the building of the tabernacle (Ex 26:19-32; 27:10-17). In Solomon’s day, silver became as common as “stones” (1 Kgs 10:27). Yet, it remained a precious commodity, and was often classified with gold, although inferior to it (Gen 24:35; 1 Kgs 15:15; Psa 105:37).

Belly and Thighs

“ . . . his belly and his thighs of brass . . . ” As we progress to the bottom of the statue, the values of the materials of which it is comprised are diminishing. The significance of this is seen in Daniel’s special notation of it. The Lord is going to use this circumstance to reveal the appointed destiny of all earthly kingdoms.

Brass is valuable, but far beneath the worth of gold and silver. In Scripture, Tubalcain, great grandson of Cain, was “an instructor of every artificer (craftsman) in brass” (Gen 4:22). Brass was also a prominent metal in the construction of the tabernacle (Ex 26:11,37). The large altar of the tabernacle, seven and one-half feet square, was overlaid with brass (Ex 27:2), and was called the “brazen altar” (Ex 38:30). The laver was also made of brass (Ex 30:18). No article of furniture within the tabernacle, however, was made of, or overlaid with, brass. Gold was used for the interior furniture (table of showbread, candlestick, altar of incense, and ark of the covenant). That fact alone shows the inferiority of brass to silver and gold, entirely apart from monetary value.

Brass, or bronze, was, as silver and gold, purified by means of heat (Ezek 22:18,20; Rev 1:15). Some consider the word “brass” to refer to copper, while others are of the opinion it is what we call bronze, which is an alloy of copper and zinc. At any rate, it was vastly inferior to fine gold, and of less value than silver.

Legs

“ . . . His legs of iron . . . ”The legs refer to the limbs between the thighs and the feet. These were made of iron, a strong metal. The first one to forge iron was Tubalcain (Gen 4:22). This metal is rarely found in its native state, and required smelting to produce. Iron melts at a temperature of about 3000 ° Fahrenheit, which tended to make it a very strong metal. Moses told Israel they would not lack anything in the land of promise, declaring it was a land “where the rocks are iron” NIV (Deut 8:9). Og, the king of Bashan, himself a giant, had an iron bed that was thirteen feet long and six feet wide (Deut 3:11). The Canaanites had chariots of iron (Josh 17:16). Sisera, who threatened Israel, had 900 chariots of iron (Judges 4:3,13). Goliath of Gath had an iron head on his spear that weighed eighteen pounds (1 Sam 17:7).

Thus, as the substance of the image became less valuable as it moved toward the feet, it also became more crude, and more related to raw power, or ruthlessness.

Feet

“ . . . his feet part of iron and part of clay.” The feet of the image were not made of pure metal. Not only was there a lessening value to the metals from head to foot, now weakness came into the picture. The strong iron of the legs is now mingled with “baked clay,” NIV thus depicting vulnerability. The picture, therefore, is of something strong and valuable at the beginning, but weak and vulnerable at its end. We will find that these feet will be the point at which a decisive blow will be struck against the whole image.

To be more precise, here, in the feet, is something very strong united with something unusually weak. You may have a chariot of iron, but you would not think of having one made of clay. An axe may be made of iron (2 Sam 12:31), but no person of sound mind would attempt to make one of clay – or even of iron mixed with clay.

The point to be seen here, and which Daniel will develop, is that whether a statue or a person is considered, the measure of strength is only as great as the weakest part. In a container or vessel, the point of rupture is always the weakest point. Whether an image, a man, or a church, defeat always comes at the weakest and most imperfect part. That part is generally an admixture. Blessed is the person who takes hold of this.

A LITTLE STONE

“ 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”

We will at once see that the dream sent from God to Nebuchadnezzar was unusually complex. Every detail is important, and significance is attached to every aspect of the image. Therefore, Daniel goes into much detail about what the king had seen. It is assumed that Daniel was also given to see the image in some way. Moved by the Lord, Daniel covers every detail, preparing the king for the remarkably extensive revelation God has given to him. Those who imagine God has no interest in details can learn much from this account. He purposes at the detail level.

YOU SAW UNTIL

“Thou sawest till that . . .” Other versions read, “You watched while,” NKJV “You continued looking until,” NASB “While you were watching,” NIV and “While you looked at the statue.” NAB The idea is that Nebuchadnezzar was captured with the greatness and impressiveness of the image – yet, the image itself was not the real point. While he was gazing upon the awful statue, something else began to happen. Eventually that “something else” will, to say the least, diminish the impressiveness of the statue.

The king is to be commended for continuing to look at the vision sent to him. Additional matters were made known to him “while” he was looking. Many a soul has missed great things from God simply because they did not “continue looking.” Whether in king Nebuchadnezzar, of those who are in Christ Jesus, it is the manner of the Kingdom for more to be made known while we continue looking

at what has already been revealed. A godly focus is the mother of an expanded understanding.

A STONE CUT OUT WITHOUT HANDS

“ . . . a stone was cut out without hands . . . ” Other versions read, “a rock was cut out, but not by human hands,” NIV “ stone which was hewn from a mountain without a hand being put to it,” NAB and “a rock was cut from a mountain by supernatural means.” NLT

The image is wholly representative of man and his works. That is why it is the image of a man, with a head, chest, arms, belly, thighs, legs, and feet. For that very reason, we should adduce that it is not intended to be the heart and core of the vision, or dream.

While the king gazes upon the image, something entirely apart from man takes place. Suddenly, there is an intrusion occurring in the world, yet not from the world. Men behold it, but did not cause it. It will impact upon men, yet no part of its origin is from them.

Unlike the image, and at its inception, the stone is not crafted, or made. No human refinement is found in it, as with gold, silver, brass, and iron. Nothing about it is an alloy, like feet made of an admixture of iron and clay. “Without hands” means wholly apart from human activity. This is an intervention in the affairs of men – something that is caused outside of man himself. Its origin is not from man in any way. The intervention is deliberate – something that has been purposed, and will be accomplished with objective. This is not happenstance.

The stone comes from a “mountain.” While the image stood in a plain, the stone came from something infinitely larger, and of greater duration, than the image. Although the image appeared unusually large, it was dwarfed before this great mountain.

THE STONE STRIKES THE IMAGE

“ . . . which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay . . . ” It is assumed this stone was a rolling stone, moving across the breadth of the earth. This assumption is founded upon the fact that it ultimately became a mountain, suggesting the stone gradually grew as it progressed. For that matter, nothing would prohibit us from seeing the stone as being hurled at the feet of the image from the mountain, as David cast the destructive stone at Goliath.

I cannot conceive of a seasoned warrior aiming his weapon at the feet of a foe. Normally, as David did with Goliath, the weapon is hurled at the head. But that is not the case here. The stone strikes the image on its feet – the place of vulnerability.

THE IMAGE IS UTTERLY DESTROYED

“ . . . and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them . . . ” The impact of this supernatural stone is most arresting. It does not effect only the feet, but the image in its entirety. It strikes the image at its weakest point – where an admixture was found.

Broken to Pieces Together

“Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together . . . ” There was a sense in which the different metals were of the same order. Though different in appearance and value, they comprised a single statue. Thus, when the very feet that supported the statue were broken, the entire image, or all of its parts, “were crushed all at the same time.” NASB As the various parts became disconnected and fell to the ground, the stone crushed and pulverized them, so they could in no wise be put together again.

It Became Chaff

“ . . . and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors . . . ” The statue in its entirety – gold, silver, brass, iron, and iron mixed with clay – “became like the dust on the floors where grain is crushed in summer.” BBE None of the gold was retained. No part of the silver remained. The brass was in a worthless condition, together all of the iron. There was no more future for the statue. It could not be maintained in any form, or in any size. Its very existence was terminated.

Carried Away

“ . . . and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them.” The remnants of the statue did not remain in a heap upon the plain. Every vestige of the image was carried away with the wind. “The wind swept them away without leaving a trace.” NIV If you had not seen the statue before, there was absolutely evidence that it ever existed.

THE STONE BECOMES A MOUNTAIN

“ . . . and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” As for the supernatural stone that struck the image, and ground it to powder, it “became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.” NIV It left no room for anything else, but became the most prominent thing in “the whole earth.” leaving no part of the world unaffected by its presence. Thus, the dream begins with an impressive statue, and concludes with a dominating mountain. From beginning to ending, it is the work of the Lord.

THE HEAD OF GOLD

“ 36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.”

Thus Daniel has precisely defined the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. No part of it has been omitted, and it is remarkable for its details. There is no chance that Daniel could have accurately related this dream by himself – a dream which, to this point, was hidden to the very one who dreamed it. As Daniel told the dream, I do not doubt that Nebuchadnezzar’s memory was strengthened, and he began to experience the very terror he had while he was having the dream. There is no question that Daniel now had his attention. Now the young prophet will tell the king things that had been revealed to him alone – things that were not made known to the king.

KING OF KINGS

“Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.” In blessing God, Daniel had confessed that he saw God both set up and removed kings. Now he will tell the king that God has set him up – that he owes his remarkable power and influence to the God of heaven. It is not something he did in his own strength.

King of Kings

The expression “king of kings” accents Nebuchadnezzar’s global power. While other kings did exist, they were subservient to him, and paid tribute to him. Artaxerxes, in addressing Ezra, referred to himself as “king of kings” (Ezra 7:12). Ezekiel also referred to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, as “king of kings” (Ezek 26:7). At the very least, the expression meant that his rule extended over many nations, each of which also had kings. In the highest sense, it meant he was the most prominent king of all.

Kingdom, Power, Strength, and Glory

The prestige and influence of Nebuchadnezzar had been given to him by “the God of heaven.” If this were not the case, he never could have risen to prominence, “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psa 75:6-7).

The largeness of the dominion given to the king is most remarkable – and we must remember it was given to him by the Living God. The global, or universal, nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom is encapsulated in these words of our text: “in your hands He has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air . Wherever they live, He has made you ruler over them all .” NIV The

Chaldean monarchy over which this king presided, at the very least, extended over Chaldea, Assyria, Arabia, Syria, Egypt, and Libya.

Jeremiah spoke similarly of Nebuchadnezzar before he destroyed Jerusalem. His words are most arresting. "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto Me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him . And all nations shall serve him " (Jer 27:5-8). The same thing is affirmed elsewhere, showing it is a pivotal consideration (Jer 28:6; 25:9; 43:10-11; Ezek 29:18-19).

This is an aspect of God that is not perceived as clearly as it should be – particularly for those who are in Christ Jesus. It would serve to relieve some hearts of a great deal of unnecessary anxiety if this were embraced by faith.

THOU ART THIS HEAD OF GOLD

"Thou art this head of gold." The meaning is not that Nebuchadnezzar himself is the head of gold, but that it is the empire over which he presides.

Herein is something that first appears strange. The Chaldeans were not noted for their refinement, as is gold. Jeremiah said they would make the land desolate (32:43). They burned Jerusalem with fire (Jer 37:8). When conquering Jerusalem, the Chaldeans pursued and overtook Zedekiah in the plans of Jericho. Nebuchadnezzar slew Zedekiah's son before his very eyes, slew the nobles of Judah, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with chains. (The Chaldeans then "burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem" (Jer 39:5-8). Habakkuk called them "that bitter and hasty nation" (Hab 1:6).

From a human point of view, which is a wrong view, that certainly does not sound like a "head of gold." It sounds more like a head of iron that hammers the nations into subjection. However, the image is being viewed as a whole, and Nebuchadnezzar represented the most illustrious empire of all. His kingdom was the most magnificent of all kingdoms.

The imposing statue stood for world, or global, government. As with everything that is in the world, global empires degenerated in their character and power. Heaven's assessments of the first of these governments places Babylon, or the Chaldean empire, as the first of this degenerative order. It was the most glorious, impressive, and magnificent. During its domination, the morality of men, while not ideal, was better.

Too, the superiority of the Babylonian empire can be traced to its prominence in the purpose of

God, just as Egypt's reason for fame can be traced. Babylon was used to chastise the Lord's people in a special way for a special sin. Egypt was used to gain a name for God. Thus, it played a more outstanding role. Yet, it would fall with all other governments. Because of the extensive involvement of the Lord with this empire, employing it for His immutable purposes, it is called the head of gold.

THREE INFERIOR KINGDOMS

“ 39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.”

As we proceed through this vision, it will become apparent that the statue represents the kingdoms of this world as they relate to the Kingdom of God. Worldly government is placed along side the government of heaven. Kings of the earth are compared with the “Prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:5). While there are some respects in which these kingdoms differ, they all share a common destiny. None of them will remain, and all of them will ultimately give way to a greater kingdom.

This is the heavenly view of the very best of human governments. From one point of view, some are superior, and others inferior. From another point of view, they are all vain, and are to be treated as things that are destined to pass away. Both views are proclaimed in our text, and are to be duly noted.

ANOTHER KINGDOM, INFERIOR TO THE FIRST

“And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee . . .” At the time Nebuchadnezzar was hearing of his dream, his empire probably appeared invincible to him. I have no doubt that he had not entertained any thought of it being replaced by another kingdom. Rather, he probably thought of those who would succeed him in maintaining the very kingdom over which he was presiding. Now, however, Daniel declares this will not be the case at all. Another kingdom will rise after his. It will not be a competing kingdom, but will replace the Chaldean, or Babylonian kingdom. It should be apparent that the boldness of faith was required for Daniel to announce this fact to the king.

Ordinarily, it would seem that an inferior kingdom could not take the place of a superior one. The very fact that one kingdom could be put down by another presumes the inferiority of the one being replaced. But that is not the case here. The next kingdom will be “inferior” to that of Nebuchadnezzar.

The Medo-Persian Empire

We know from Scripture that this other kingdom was that of the Medes and the Persians, sometimes referred to by historians as the Medo-Persian empire. This dual dynasty is represented by the two arms of silver, joined to a single breast, which stood for the empire itself.

Later in Daniel, Belshazzar, the last of the Babylonian monarchs will be categorically told that his kingdom would be “divided, and given to the Medes and Persians ” (5:28). That very night, Belshazzar was killed, “and Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old” (5:31). The Persian aspect of the rule was fulfilled in “Cyrus the Persian” (6:28).

Much is made of this shift of power in the book of Daniel. Some introductory thoughts on the matter will be appropriate here, reserving the greater part until the later chapters. In chapter eight, Daniel saw a ram with two horns pushing its way “westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.” It was revealed to Daniel, “The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia ” (8:3-4,20).

Isaiah also prophesied that God would “stir up the Medes against” Babylon (Isa 13:17; 21:2), causing Babylon to fall (Isa 21:9). Habbabuk declared this would take place because the Chaldean (Babylonian) king went further than he should have. Not content to be God’s servant in chastening Israel, he committed the grievous offense of “Ascribing this power to his god” (Hab 1:11). Belshazzar in particular did this (Dan 5:3-4), precisely fulfilling the word of Isaiah. Daniel reminded Belshazzar that Nebuchadnezzar had also provoked God in this manner. “But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him” (Dan 5:20). It was not mere happenstance that the kingdom of Babylon fell.

The Medo-Persian Inferiority

The inferiority of the succeeding empire was certainly not due to inferior power or military strategy. Proving the superiority of their stealth, and under the general leadership of Cyrus, the army drained off the waters of the Euphrates, leaving the channel dry beneath the walls of Babylon, through which the devastating army passed.

Further, the description given to Cyrus gives no suggestion of inferiority. “Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me ” (2 Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:2). In what sense, then, was this second empire inferior?

Some students of history point out the noticeable decline in the character of the Persian kings. While Cyrus conducted himself in an admirable way, one historian affirms, “The kings of Persia were the worst race of men that ever governed an empire.” Prideaux Others point out the decline in their

military exploits. After Cyrus, history records a number of defeats and strategic blunders by Persians kings, who often conducted themselves as madmen. Prideaux

Still others point out the moral degeneracy that accelerated during the dominance of the Persian empire. The historian Lyman wrote, “symptoms of decay and corruption were manifest in the empire; the national character gradually degenerated; the citizens were corrupted and enfeebled by luxury; and confided more in mercenary troops than in native valor and fidelity. The kings submitted to the control of their wives, or the creatures whom they raised to posts of distinction; and the satraps, from being civil functionaries, began to usurp military authority.”

In my judgment, it is this latter circumstance that particularly made the Medo-Persian empire inferior. Their rule, while a formidable one, did not succeed in subduing immorality and all manner of vice and crime – something for which God has ordained government (Rom 13:1-5).

THE THIRD KINGDOM OF BRASS

“ . . . and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.” Continuing the degenerative process, the third kingdom, or the one following the Medo-Persian kingdom, would be inferior to its predecessor. It is depicted by the abdomen and thighs of brass. This is the Grecian empire, which overthrew the Medo-Persian dominion. You will notice that all of the kingdoms are overthrown, they do not simply die, or fade away.

Later in Daniel, the Grecian empire is depicted as a “he goat” which came from the west. He “was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand” NKJV (8:7). Later in that chapter a heavenly messenger explained to Daniel, “the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king” (8:20). Thus the Medo-Persian empire was violently overthrown, just as the Babylonian one was.

A More Profound Explanation

An even higher view of this governmental change is also explained to Daniel. After praying for understanding, and waiting for three weeks without a word from heaven, an angel arrived in answer to the prophet’s prayer. The angel explained he was sent from heaven the very moment Daniel’s prayer came into the throne room. However, he was detained by a spiritual power called “the prince of Persia.” After struggling for three weeks with this principality, Michael, a chief angel came to “help” him, freeing him to come to Daniel. As soon as he had delivered his message, however, he would return and resume battle with “the prince of Persia.” Following the overthrow of this Satanic principality, the angel said , “the prince of Grecia shall come” (10:12-20). In other words, there was also a wicked principality over Greece, and he would cause the Grecian empire to assume prominence.

Thus, we are provided profound details concerning the overthrow of one kingdom, and the rise of

another to power. The real overthrow took place in the heavenly realms, where “the rulers of the darkness of this world” reside (Eph 6:12). It is most remarkable that such an understanding was granted to Daniel during the time of the Old Covenant. This was because he was “greatly beloved” by God (9:23; 10:11,19), and was thus given extraordinary insight concerning the affairs of this world.

I will only mention here that the first king of the Grecian empire was none other than Alexander the Great. More will be opened concerning his identity when we come to the eighth chapter. He conquered the Persian empire, and annexed it to Macedonia. . GROLLIER’S ENC

THE FOURTH KINGDOM, STRONG AS IRON

“ And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.” Keep in mind, the Lord is opening the future regarding world, or global, dominions. In identifying them as a single statue, the Lord confirms they all have something in common, operating upon the same set of worldly principles. Notwithstanding, their wisdom is totally unacceptable, as well as their ways. Thus, all four of them will fall.

The predominate metal in this section of the statue was iron, emblematic of great strength: “for iron breaks and smashes everything--and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.” NIV Iron was used for weapons of destruction (Num 35:16), yokes that could not be borne (Deut 28:48), chariots of warfare (Josh 17:16), spearheads (1 Sam 17:7), axes (2 Sam 12:31), and rods that broke the power of the enemy (Psa 2:9). Iron speaks of force – dominating and excessive force that subdues.

Of this kingdom, it is noted that they “subdued and conquered all others; not the Jews only, but the Persians, Egyptians, Syrians, Africans, French, Germans, yea the whole world.” JOHN GILL Later, when the New Covenant Scriptures were written, the Roman empire was referred to as “all the world” (Luke 2:1). They were also crude and hard in their military exploits, and “surpassed the cruelty and barbarity of the Macedonians and the Medo-Persians.” CALVIN

The fourth global empire is depicted in its beginning as iron, and as a mixture of iron and clay at its conclusion. It will be characterized by great power, “subduing all things,” and breaking its opponents in pieces, and bruising them. Because these are succeeding kingdoms, and not random ones, we know this fourth one is Rome. Because it covers such an extensive period, more is said of it than any of the other kingdoms.

We know from what follows that this kingdom was in place when the Savior came, pictured as a stone cut out of a mountain “without hands.” That would make the fourth kingdom the Roman empire, which had a shaky beginning, but extended from 509 BC until 476 AD, when it fell to the German chieftain Odoacer – after over 1,000 years. During its reign, it beat down the constitutions and independence of all other kingdoms, making them subservient to itself. This circumstance is confirmed in the Apostolic writings (John 11:48; Acts 25:16; 28:17).

Thus, because it intersects with God's kingdom, additional information is given concerning the Roman empire. For those living centuries before Christ, this would provide a sort of index that would permit them to know the general time when the Lord would set up His kingdom. It would also raise their hope to anticipate better times. For those living after the enthronement of Jesus, it provides a glimpse of how His everlasting kingdom has progressed through history, smashing down all other kingdoms, and destined to ultimately fill the whole earth.

In every way, the kingdom God sets up is superior. That kingdom is the reason for the dream sent to Nebuchadnezzar.

THE MOST INFERIOR KINGDOM

“ 41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with lay.”

The Roman kingdom is the legs, feet, and toes of the statue. From one point of view, it is the final global empire. From another viewpoint, it supports the whole superstructure of global power. Because it moves toward the initiation of “a kingdom” which will be set up by God Himself, it will become weaker and weaker, finally giving way to the sway of an eternal kingdom. Just as the Babylonian kingdom was like the sun at its zenith, the Roman kingdom was like the setting sun at the close of the day.

The Lord has revealed to Daniel the means by which this long kingdom would become weaker. The two diluting influences were division and mingling, partitioning and amalgamation.

STRONG, BUT DIVIDED

“And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.”

As I have already indicated, “iron” speaks of powerfully subduing those who are opposed, so that none are able to resist. Now, the Spirit makes this point once again. However, this not only accentuates the nature of the Roman dominion. It will also serves to highlight the superiority of the kingdom of God, which will grind to powder the “iron” of Rome, as well as the gold of Babylon, the silver of the Medo-Persians, and the brass of Greece.

From one point of view, therefore, we see the power and majesty of a worldly government. From another, we behold the absolute superiority of the kingdom of God which, by appearance, was only a small stone at its inception.

Division

Now we learn that the first weakening factor was division: “the kingdom shall be divided .” The Spirit gets to the root of the matter, showing that this government made an attempt to mingle things that could not truly be united – like clay and iron. The division is not seen in the legs of the statue, but in “the feet and toes, part of potters’ clay, and part of iron.” The division is not primarily depicted by the ten toes, but by the admixture of iron and clay. The “clay” is weakness, and portrays something that could not blend with strength, which was the meaning of “iron.”

From the historical perspective, the preceding three monarchies (Babylon, Medo-Persian, and Greek) were basically homogeneous in their character. They did not allow the intermingling of foreign manners or customs in their kingdom. Conquered nations would conform to the manner of those three empires. This is seen in the Babylonian training of Daniel and his colleagues. They were taught “the literature and language of the Chaldeans” NASB (Dan 1:4). The Romans, however, allowed the subservient nations to keep their manners, even appointing special rulers to assure this took place without any political disturbance. Herod (king of Judea, Luke 1:5) and Pontius Pilate (governor of Judea, Matt 27:2) were such rulers. They were Roman prelates charged with maintaining political order in a Jewish province. This was the Roman manner. However, it would prove to be the very means through which that majestic empire would crumble.

At the Root of the Matter

At its root, division occurs when a single entity contains hostile elements - things that cannot, under any circumstances, blend, or become harmonious. Of such a condition Jesus said, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation ; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand ” (Matt 12:25). And again , “And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand . And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand ” (Mark 3:24-25). In this circumstance, Jesus spoke of certain hostilities that would surface. “For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three . The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law” (Lk 12:52-53).

Whether, therefore, in a kingdom, or in an individual household, division is lethal. Division is an environment in which Satan is loosed, and destruction is sure. The law established by God, that cannot successfully be violated, is that where division exists, desolation is sure. That law, or principle, is to a moral environment what the law of gravity is to a natural one.

A Vital Application

The people of God must pick up on what is being said in this text. There still exist admixtures – things that cannot be blended together. This is a condition where one thing is weak like clay, and another is strong like iron. Any attempt to unite them will dictate a sure fall. Some examples of these admixtures are provided in Scripture.

Our text is speaking of the governments of this world. However, in it there is a principle that transports to individual lives, households, churches, and even nations.

- If an individual makes an attempt to blend light and darkness in their life, they will lose their life!
- If a family has both saved and lost in it, there will be friction.
- If a church makes an effort to merge the flesh and the Spirit, it will fail.

I do not believe these things are commonly recognized. They certainly are not preached or taught with any degree of consistency or zeal. Nevertheless, they are true, and are indelibly stamped in the historical circumstances unveiled in our text.

THE MINGLING THAT WEAKENED

“And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men . . .” Other versions read, “they will combine with one another in the seed of men,” NASB “so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united,” NIV “so will they mix with one another in marriage,” NRSV “they will give their daughters to one another as wives,” BBE “they shall seal their alliances by intermarriage,” NAB “will try to strengthen themselves by forming alliances with each other through intermarriage,” NLT and “so the two will be mixed together in human seed.” NJB

This text could, indeed, be greatly corrupted by imagining it is speaking of a mixing of races. I am careful to point out that nothing could be further the truth. Our text is not speaking on the racial level, and makes no reference whatsoever to races. The emphasis is the merging of conflicting national interests, and the attempted amalgamation of strong and inferior political acumen. The thrust is upon character and ability, not blood lines and family ancestry.

The Romans sought to bring conquered nations into the fold through intermarriage, a tactic that

has often been used. Thus Pharaoh gave Joseph an Egyptian wife (Gen 41:45). Another Egyptian Pharaoh gave Hadad the Edomite a wife, who was the sister of his own wife (1 Kgs 11:19). The Romans made a practice of this, supposing it would add stability to their government. It proved to be their undoing.

Intermarriage

In Christ, believers are solemnly warned not to be “unequally yoked” to unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14). This is of particular importance in the matter of marriage. The Scriptures recognize that some are caught in such a yoke because of grievous circumstance, and graciously addresses the situation in the seventh chapter of First Corinthians. The believer is not to seek to undo such a marriage, particularly when the unbeliever is pleased to dwell peaceably with him/her (1 Cor 7:13-14). However, even in that circumstance, the fact of unavoidable and irreconcilable differences is addressed (1 Cor 7:15-16).

It is not the purpose of either this lesson, or the Word of God itself, to address and resolve marital differences – and that is not the point of our text. We must treat considerately and lovingly those who are experiencing conflicts in their marriage. Those who are in such a case must seek peace, and heartily endeavor to save their husband or wife, knowing that the marriage is acceptable because of the believer (7:14,16).

A note of warning, however, must be sounded to those who are not yet married, or who are in a widowed state. The word of our Lord is quite clear on this matter, even though it is not fashionable to declare it. Those who are eligible for marriage can marry whom “they will, only in the Lord” (1 Cor 7:39).

The Example of Solomon

You may recall that the fall of Solomon was traceable to the heathen wives that he married. “Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love . . . For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods” (1 Kings 11:2,4). Moses had warned this would happen, yet Solomon ignored those words. “Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly” (Deut 7:3-4). Of this circumstance Nehemiah said, “Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin” (Neh 13:26).

This Is Relevant

Although unworthy of an extended commentary, these words are, indeed, pertinent to the exposition of this text. What God gives can be joined together, whether it is the saints themselves, or the various gifts and abilities they possess. But the fourth kingdom sought to mingle something that was

destructive. If the law against mingling was so powerfully demonstrated in the fall of an empire, it will be even more firmly confirmed in the realm of the Spirit. It is a fact of the Kingdom that principles, or laws, that are operative in nature and social matters, are made stronger and more firm in the Spirit. That can be seen in things like light, infection, and conflict. The higher you move in environment, the more pronounced these laws become.

UNITY IMPOSSIBLE

“ . . . but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with lay.” By mingling the weak and strong, the enemy and the friend, the ignorant and the wise, and the defeated and the conquerors, Rome set itself up for a fall. Just as clay could not remain united to iron, so the compound of peoples Rome sought to accomplish could not remain together. What they thought to be a strength was actually a weakness.

Let the people of God learn to forever cease from any attempt to unite themselves with irreconcilable differences. This cannot even be accomplished in the matter of our salvation. There has to be a change in people, a new birth, or a new creation, before they can be joined to the Lord. Nature is like clay that cannot mix with the iron of Divinity. This unalterable principle is seen in our text. Much can be learned from it that will profit the saints of God. It is good to thoughtfully consider these things.

AN ETERNAL KINGDOM

“ 44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.” Now we come to the heart and core of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. At the first, the focus seemed to be upon a large and imposing statue. But as the dream progresses, the attention is shifted to a seemingly unimportant stone, with which man had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do.

In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw “a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands: and it struck the statue upon the feet thereof that were of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.” DUOAY Something small became destructive of something exceedingly large. Something small became larger than the thing it crushed, eventually filling all the earth. Now the Spirit will interpret the meaning of this aspect of the dream.

THESE KINGS

“And in the days of these kings . . . ” The term “these kings,” in general, refers to the whole statue, and the four kingdoms it represented. “These kings” means the image was to be considered as a

whole, even though it was comprised of differing parts. So far as their destiny was concerned, the parts were not different. They were only different in appearance and continuance, but not in nature. From the heavenly perspective, which is the true one, they were all the same – a single entity. Thus, although what follows occurred during the time of the fourth kingdom (as depicted by the feet and toes), yet it was a judgment against all of the kingdoms. Although the three previous kingdoms were toppled centuries before the last one, yet their demise was really owing to the stone, cut out of a mountain without hands. The phrase “these kings,” then, refers to the time of global empires, when no other human kingdom could exist, regardless of its seeming greatness and power.

A KINGDOM SET UP

“ . . . shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom . . . ” Here the setting up of a kingdom is related to the demise of competing kingdoms. Before it reaches its apex, other kings must first be defeated. This is the principle the Lord enunciated to Jeremiah when He appointed him to be a prophet. “See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant” (Jer 1:10). God will set up a seemingly unimposing kingdom “in the days of these kings.”

The Kingdom that Was At Hand

When mighty John the Baptist came preaching, he said, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ” (Matt 3:2). Mark adds that John said, “ The time is fulfilled , and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mk 1:15). This was the kingdom of which Daniel spoke. Immediately following his baptism and temptation in the wilderness, “Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand ” (Matt 4:17). The “God of heaven” was about to set up “the kingdom of heaven.” When Jesus first sent out the “twelve,” He told them , “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand ” (Matt 10:7).

Jesus Clarifies the Matter

Jesus declared the Kingdom God was setting up was precisely like the “stone” Nebuchadnezzar saw – it would unimposing at the first, and dominating at the last. “The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs , and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matt 13:31). And again, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened ” (Matt 13:31).

Some have imagined that these texts refer to the church, or to something that purports to be the kingdom of heaven, but is actually not. However, this is an utterly false notion. Jesus said “kingdom of heaven” because that is what He had announced was at hand. He was not preparing men for the expansion of the flesh, but for the working of the Spirit. He was affirming exactly what Daniel said: the kingdom God was setting up would be small and unimpressive at the first, but large and dominating in its consummation.

The phrase “kingdom of heaven” is used thirty-two times in Scripture (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 5:3,10,19,20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11,12; 13:11,24,31,33,44,45,46,52; 16:19; 18:1,3,4,23; 19:14,23; 20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1,14). In addition to being “like” a mustard seed and leaven, it is said to be “like” a number of other things. Each one describes a facet of the heavenly kingdom.

- A treasure hid in a field (Matt 13:44)
- A merchant man seeking goodly pearls (Matt 13:45)
- A net cast into the sea, gathering all manner of fish (Matt 13:47)
- A man that is a householder, who brings things from his treasury that are both old and new (Matt 13:52)
- A householder who hired laborers for his vineyard (Matt 20:1)
- A certain king who made a marriage for his son (22:2)
- A man who sowed good seed in his field (Matt 13:24)
- A certain king who took account of his servants (Matt 18:23)
- Ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom (Matt 25:1)

In the days of “these kings, ” God began doing all of these things to which Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven. This is how he began setting up His kingdom.

- Something was deposited in fields accessible to men – that is, treasures of heaven were brought within the grasp of men.
- A good pearl, and one of great price, was placed in the domain ruled by Satan.
- The Lord began to gather workers for His kingdom, colaborers together with God, and reapers for His harvest.
- He began preparing a bride, who would be adorned for her husband, the Lord Jesus Himself.

- The good seed of the Gospel began to be sowed among men.
- The Lord began to prepare men to give an account to Him by granting them a stewardship – responsible positions in His kingdom.
- The sons of men were told of a coming bridegroom, for whose appearing they must prepare.

“The God of heaven” was setting up His kingdom. He was doing so while Daniel’s image was still standing, and appeared powerful and invincible! A climactic change began to take place in the world, unnoticed by men, but keenly observed by angelic hosts.

At the threshold of His ministry, Jesus returned to His home town. As His custom was, He entered into the synagogue, and stood up to read. No doubt He had often done this prior to His baptism and temptation – but this day was different. On this occasion, He has handed the book of Isaiah, and He read with such power and passion that He arrested the attention of all who were there. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:18-19). He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. There was not a single distraction in all of the synagogue! It is written that “the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him” (v 20). Suddenly the thickness of inquiring silence was broken, and Jesus said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (v 21) . GOD WAS SETTING UP A KINGDOM – the very one of which Daniel prophesied. It was a kingdom that would devastate all competing forces, rescue man from a state of death and condemnation, and, and bring life and hope to those who sat in great darkness!

Jesus is to this kingdom what Nebuchadnezzar was to Babylon, Cyrus and Darius were to the Medo-Persians, Alexander was to Greece, and the Caesars were to Rome. He stood for the kingdom, as those kings stood for their kingdoms.

After the Kingdom was “set up,” and the King coronated, the official inauguration took place when “the day of Pentecost was fully come” (Acts 2:1). With the King in place, enthroned in glory with all power in heaven and earth delivered to him (Matt 28:18), He sent the Holy Spirit through the very domain of the devil, into the region of moral and spiritual darkness. Suddenly, those who were afraid became bold. The Scriptures came alive. Holy men were able to correlate what the holy prophets had said with what Jesus was doing in their very presence. Insight into the death and resurrection of Jesus was granted. Men were able to preach with convicting power. The door of salvation was thrown open to anyone who would call upon the name of the Lord. The means of entrance were proclaimed, and gladly received and obeyed. The Lord began adding to the church every day those who were being saved (Acts 2). God had set up a kingdom – the very one Daniel declared.

This was not a military kingdom. Rather, it was a kingdom of salvation. The king of this vast empire, Jesus Christ, commenced a reign that would conclude with all competing and temporal authority and power being “put down” (1 Cor 15:24). He would bring many sons to glory (Heb 2:10), right through the enemy’s territory, losing none of them. He would feed them (Isa 40:11), lead them

(John 10:3), and empower them (2 Tim 1:7). He would make them stand (Rom 14:4), keep them from falling (Jude 24), and present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 25).

That is the kingdom God has “set up,” and it is effectively undoing the work of Satan, giving life to those who were dead in trespasses and sins, and ministering everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

NEVER DESTROYED

“ . . . which shall never be destroyed . . . ” The Kingdom God set up “in the days of these kings,” or during the dominance of the Roman empire, will “never be destroyed.” This is not a temporal kingdom, designed only for a brief period of time. It is, as Peter put it, “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:11).

Isaiah prophesied this would be the nature of the government of Jesus. “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end , upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD” (Isa 9:6-7). This prophecy correlates with our text.

Associated With His Saviorhood

This kingdom, set up by God, and administered by Jesus, is not one to be unveiled in the future. Rather, it is related to Christ’s being the Savior. The phrases “Child is Born” and “Son is given” can only apply to Christ’s role as the Savior of the world. These terms relate to the beginning of His Kingdom, not its concluding phase, as some suppose. Nowhere is Christ’s second appearing referred to as a Child being born, or a Son being given. That is simply too apparent to spend any further time on it.

Further, His “government” and “peace” are related to the day of salvation. His reign commenced when He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. As it is written, “But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool” (Heb 10:12). If some imagine He is waiting to reign, the Spirit declares , “For He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under His feet” (1 Cor 15:25) . It is His reign that is subduing His enemies.

But there is more on this subject, which has been greatly garbled by men who do not know whereof they speak. On the day the Kingdom was inaugurated, Peter declared Jesus had been exalted to the throne of David , which Isaiah declared was the seat of the Son’s rule, or government (Isa 9:7). Peter relates that enthronement to Christ’s resurrection. “For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the

Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did My heart rejoice, and My tongue was glad; moreover also My flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave My soul in hell [Hades] , neither wilt thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to Me the ways of life; thou shalt make Me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ , that His soul was not left in hell [Hades] , neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear . For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ ” (Acts 2:25-36).

Some things of especial interest in this insightful proclamation are worthy of further remarks. This was not a casual commentary upon Scripture, but the illumination of something formerly concealed to the sons of men.

- The promise has to do with Jesus being raised up to sit on David’s throne, according to God’s promise (v 30).
- The promise to David was fulfilled by Jesus being exalted to the right hand of the Father (v 33).
- David is speaking of the coming Messiah, whom He, by faith, considered his own Lord, even though he had not seen Him (v 34).
- God has made Jesus “Lord” – i.e. the “Lord” of whom David spake when He said. “The Lord said unto MY LORD , Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make thy foes Thy footstool.” (v 34, 36).
- God has made Jesus “Christ” – the Christ promised to David in the words, “knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up CHRIST to sit on His throne” (v 30,36).

Thus, the Kingdom of the second chapter of Daniel and the ninth chapter of Isaiah are the same. Further, that Kingdom is presently being administered by the “Child” and “Son” of Isaiah 9:6, the “Lord” of Psalm 110:1 and Acts two, and the “Christ” of Second Samuel 7:11-16 and Acts 2:36.

Saints Receive in this Kingdom Now

This is a Kingdom that will never end. It will transport from time to eternity, and from earth to glory. Actually, it is eternal now, and is experienced by faith while we are in this world. Under the

administration of Jesus, it is a kingdom that consists of “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). It is not made known in words, decrees, and rules, like the kingdoms of men, but is “in power” (1 Cor 4:20). It is a kingdom those who are in Christ Jesus are presently receiving. As it is written, “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:28-29). “Cannot be moved” equates to the “never be destroyed” of Daniel. That is the precise kingdom of which our text speaks.

One of the vivid descriptions of being justified by faith is provided in Colossians 1:13. It mentions the kingdom referenced in our text. “For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Col 1:13-14).

Satan Powerless to Stop It

Now, in our text, over six hundred years before this Kingdom is to be set up, God makes the matter known. I do not doubt that the devil and the hosts of darkness, perhaps even “the prince of Persia” and “the prince of Grecia,” overheard, as it were, this marvelous prophecy. If that is the case, it is as though God is challenging the hosts of darkness to do their best to stop this kingdom from being set up. Let them seek to develop some dark strategy that will keep the kingdoms of this world going on, and stop the God of heaven from setting up this kingdom! As the very effectiveness of salvation loudly testifies, “the great red dragon” could not stop the Ruler from being born, being caught up to God, or enthroned in glory (Rev 12:4-5). He could do nothing about the redeemed being nourished by King Jesus as they were receiving His unmoveable kingdom (Rev 12:6). In spite of his anger, fierce and cunning opposition, and aggressive spirit, those in Christ’s kingdom still overcome him “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Rev 12:11).

NOT LEFT TO OTHER PEOPLE

“ . . . and the kingdom shall not be left to other people . . . ” The idea is that the kingdom will not be succeeded by another kingdom. This government will never pass into the hands of another people, like Babylon passed to the Medo-Persians, the Medo-Persians passed to the Greeks, and the Greeks passed to the Romans. Thus the New Jerusalem Bible reads, “and this kingdom will not pass into the hands of another race.”

Other versions read, “ no one will ever conquer it,” NLT “a kingdom that shall never be destroyed or delivered up to another people,” NAB “and its power will never be given into the hands of another people,” BBE and “and the sovereignty thereof shall not be left to another people.” DARBY

The Saints and this Kingdom

The idea here is that this kingdom will not pass to “another,” or “strange,” people. The Medo-Persians differed in both culture and manner from the Babylonians. The Greeks also were different

than the Medo-Persians in culture and manner. The Romans differed from the Greeks in those areas also. Each succeeding kingdom bore a different kind of nature, as depicted in the various substances that represented them: gold, silver, brass, iron, and iron and clay.

To Be Given to the Saints

In the grand scheme of things, this everlasting kingdom will be given to the saints of the Most High God. They will not replace Jesus, but will be “joint heirs” with Him (Rom 8:17). They will not supercede the reign of Jesus, but will reign with Him (2 Tim 2:12).

Thus, before the close of his book, Daniel proclaims this very fact – that this kingdom will be given to the saints of the Most High God. Again, this text will strengthen our hope.

- “But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever” (Dan 7:18).
- “Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High ; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom ” (Dan 7:22).
- “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High , whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (Dan 7:27).

A Marvelous Circumstance

Briefly, this is a most amazing circumstance, sharply conflicting with both the nature and purpose of earthly kingdoms. In Christ, what was a mark of inferiority in the world, becomes a mark of blessing and benefit. You will recall that the image represented the passing of power to inferior kingdoms – each one being inferior to the one preceding it. This was seen in the metals representing the kingdoms.

This inferiority was confirmed in a number of ways. However, I draw your attention to one facet of that inferiority that is particularly applicable here.

- In the Babylonian empire, there was really only one free man – Nebuchadnezzar, or the king. All others were his servants, and none of them were totally free.
- In the Medo-Persian empire, there were additional nobles that made the king less powerful. More people, so to speak, were free, and able to execute their will.

- In the Grecian empire the circumference of freedom continued to expand, as authority was more and more delegated to people other than the king.
- In the Roman empire, with its senate and elaborate form of government, this principle was expanded even more, bringing more people into the circle of power – people of divers manners, culture, and views.

This ever expanding nucleus of political power tended to weaken the kingdoms, for it allowed for competition, strife within the ranks, and inner conflicts. When power is distributed to all of the people, degeneracy tends to expand, and chaos is brought more to the forefront. Thus, Moses upbraided the Israelites for seeking to do their own thing. “You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes” NASB (Deut 12:8). Again, during the time of the Judges, when there was no king in Israel, “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6; 21:25). The results were not good, and moral and spiritual degeneracy grew. In our very own nation, this sort of attitude is heavily promoted, and it has not produced good results. However a person may view our form of government, if the people are not righteous, it cannot be good.

When God set up His kingdom, it had one Ruler, one absolute Sovereign. Every knee will bow to Him, and every tongue will confess that He, and He alone, is “Lord” (Phil 2:10). This type of rule was seen in Nebuchadnezzar, although he himself was not righteous. It was NOT seen in the Medo-Persian, Grecian, or Roman kingdoms. That is another reason why they were “inferior.”

At this point, however, there is another significant difference. Christ’s kingdom will not be overtaken and replaced by an other kingdom, and is eternal in nature. Yet, it will be “given to the saints of the Most High God,” who themselves have been translated into this kingdom. On the fleshly plain, this would make the kingdom an inferior one. However, on the spiritual plain, it demonstrates its superiority.

The reason for this superiority is most evident. In Christ Jesus, the constituents of the Kingdom are being conformed to the image of its Ruler (Rom 8:19). When they are perfected, and have apprehended that for which they have been apprehended, there will be no difference in their character and that of the Lord. No seed of competition will remain in them, but they will “be like Him” (1 John 3:2). That is why the kingdom can be given to them without any measure of inferiority occurring.

This glorious circumstance confirms the relevance of the passage before us. It is a text that fuels hope and strengthens faith.

IT WILL DESTROY ALL THESE KINGDOMS

“ . . . but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms . . . ” Other versions read, “it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms,” NASB “It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end,” NIV “it will shatter and absorb all the previous kingdoms,” NJB “It will shatter all these kingdoms into nothingness ,” NLT “But it shall beat to pieces and grind to powder all other

kingdoms,” SEPTUAGINT and “it beateth small and endeth all these kingdoms.” YLT

This utter destruction was represented by the supernatural stone striking the image on the vulnerable feet of iron and clay, breaking them to pieces. “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found ” NASB (2:35).

These kingdoms will not rise from the ashes of defeat. Their dynasties will end absolutely. They will never be able to regain their power. This utter destruction can be accounted for in two ways.

- First, the vastly superior and eternal kingdom of Christ has supplanted them.
- Second, their purpose has been served, and no further reason can be adduced for their presence.

The basic spiritual principle that accounts for the destruction of worldly kingdoms by Christ’s kingdom is this: “the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). However illustrious and efficient the kingdoms of this world may appear, they are still driven by “the carnal mind” – the unregenerate mind. By its very nature, there are no heavenly interests in earthly government. It is designed for this world, and this world alone. The earth is the terminal point of all of its interests and objectives. There is not a solitary point in which the governments of this world can extend their thoughts, purposes, or goals beyond “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4). That makes them temporal, and hence, by their very nature, destined to failure.

This does not suggest a believer cannot be involved in politics. Joseph was a political ruler (Gen 41:40), and Daniel as well (Dan 6:2-3). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo were also political entities (Dan 2:49). The Ethiopian eunuch was (Acts 8:27). Erastus also was in a governmental office (Rom 16:23). In these positions, these godly men lived by faith, refusing to do anything that was displeasing to their Lord. Their faith made them superior, not the government in which they participated. There was not a single aspect of their persons that was better because they played a role in governmental affairs. It was their relation to God, and solely that relation, that gave them true advantage.

Jesus Will Not compete!

It was foretold that the Messiah would utterly decimate all worldly kingdoms. The kings of the earth are admonished to give due heed to this word. “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth” (Psa 2:8-9). The sixtieth chapter of Isaiah speaks of the glorious reign of Messiah. It is depicted as destroying the gross darkness that covered the people (verse 2). The Gentiles will be illuminated, volunteering to come to the light (verse 3). The gates of salvation will be opened day and night for whosoever will (verse 11). The prophet then adds, “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted” (verse 12). This is more precisely

declared in our text. Paul adds this word, “when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power . For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet ” (1 Cor 15:24-25).

The Lord Jesus will NOT compete with other leaders, whether they are among men, or in the spirit world. In the end, “He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power” (1 Cor 15:24). If these rulers, authorities, and powers seem to be invincible now, or intended to last forever, it is only a delusion. Every worldly government, regardless of its noble beginnings, eventually comes out against Christ and righteousness. We have seen this come to pass in our own country, with its laws against prayer, Christian representations, and teaching the Word of God in public schools. This does not mean no godly people have ever, or presently do, exist in government. It does mean that all earthly power contains within itself the seeds of pride and self-exaltation.

But Jesus will not compete with other authorities and powers. Rather, He will crush them, bringing them to nought. He may use them, as He did with Babylon, chastening Israel through the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, his “servant” (Jer 27:6). Or He may employ Persia to underwrite the rebuilding of the Temple, as He did with Cyrus, also His servant (2 Chron 36:22-23). But in the end, both Babylon and Persia were crushed by the kingdom of Christ. His Kingdom is why they fell.

IT WILL STAND FOREVER

“ . . . and it shall stand for ever.” Note, our text does not say it will merely exist for ever. Rather, it will “stand,” maintaining its dominance and spreading its borders, for of its “increase,” there will be no end (Isa 9:6). This is a kingdom that extends into eternity, and we have been translated into it!

This is the circumstance to which the dream referred when it depicted the supernatural stone becoming a mountain and filling all the earth (2:35). This kingdom will leave no place or opportunity for any competing kingdom.

The prophets alluded to this prophecy in yet another way. It is refreshing, yet challenging, to read their words.

- “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee” (Psa 22:27).
- “Beautiful for situation , the joy of the whole earth , is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King” (Psa 48:2).
- “And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory ; Amen, and Amen” (Psa 72:19).

- “ All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name” (Psa 86:9).
- “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:9).
- “ The whole earth is at rest , and is quiet: they break forth into singing” (Isa 14:70).
- “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD , as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14).

Whatever a person may choose to believe about these stirring texts, it must be acknowledged that they postulate the total overthrow of all enemies. They require the complete removal of all competing powers and kingdoms.

These were written in view of the nature of Christ’s kingdom, which is one of salvation and redemption from the fall, not military power. That is precisely why His kingdom is superior. It is “not of this world” (John 18:36). Now Daniel will affirm the sureness of what he has declared to the king. He will confirm there is no way this will not happen.

IT IS A SURE THING!

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

Daniel has presented the revelation he received in a most excellent manner. He first told the king that the thing he demanded could not be made known through “the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers.” Next, he brought the mind of the king to a consideration of the God in heaven who reveals secrets – like the one with which the king was wrestling. . Then Daniel told the king God had revealed things to him that would come to pass in the latter days. He explained the circumstances under which these things were made known to Nebuchadnezzar: “thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed.” Daniel then confessed to the king that these things had not been revealed to him because of any superior natural wisdom he possessed. He then made known the dream, furnishing every detail of it. The inspired interpretation of the dream was then declared. It too was in the finest detail. Now the prophet concludes his presentation, making sure Nebuchadnezzar precisely remembers what he dreamed, who sent the dream to him, and that it was certain. There was no chance the things revealed to him would not come to pass in their entirety.

HOLY REHEARSAL

“Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold . . .” In Daniel’s summarization of the dream, he turns the attention from the image to the stone. In relating the dream, he began by describing a marvelous image, then declaring the stone. In his conclusion, he begins with the stone, and ends with a demolished image. Thus, he is making sure the king is left with the correct perspective. What was done without human intervention utterly destroyed the best of human innovation. That is a reality upon which we must continually rely.

IT WILL COME TO PASS

“ . . . the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter . . .” Other versions read, “the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future,” NASB and “The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future.” NIV The three references made to this dream accent that, for Nebuchadnezzar, it is up ahead and at the end of time: “what shall be in the latter days,” 2:28 “what shall come to pass ,” 2:29 and “what shall come to pass .” 2:45

This is not a prediction, which things magicians, astrologers, and sorcerers make. Scripture refer to such things as “prognostications” KJV or “predictions” NASB/NIV (Isa 47:13; Acts 16:16). Later versions of Scripture use the words “predict,” “predicted,” or “prediction,” when referring to prophecies (1 Sam 28:17; Acts 7:52; 11:28; 1 Pet 1:11). NIV/NASB This is a very loose translation of the word. I prefer the translation “showed before,” “signified,” and “testified beforehand.” The word used in Scripture means to declare beforehand. That is, something God has determined, and will accomplish, is announced.

While the word “prophesy” is not used in our text, the sense of it is affirmed. By saying “what shall come to pass,” “certain,” and “sure,” Daniel is confirming this is NOT a prognostication, which is based upon observations made under the heavens, or information received from nether sources. The God of heaven has shown Nebuchadnezzar what HE HIMSELF is going to do. This was not a prediction of some fateful event that was going to occur. Rather, it was the announcement of determinations made in heaven, and that would be carried out without a smallest deviation.

CERTAIN DREAM, SURE INTERPRETATION

“ . . . and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” This is a declaration of Divine intention. Herein is the difference between a prophecy and a prediction. It is an example of what the Lord has elsewhere declared. “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa 46:9-10).

I want to be emphatic about this. God has not declared what He has seen men doing in the future – peering into the future, as it were, and gaining a knowledge of what is coming. He is, of course,

fully capable of this. But that is not the declaration of our text. God has made known what He has determined, and that is precisely why it will come to pass. It will not come to pass because He sees it, but because He has so determined. That is the reason for the interpretation being sure.

There is a reason why such an accent is placed upon this by Daniel. Man, by nature, is prone to doubt. Even after God reveals what He is going to do, flesh shouts back, “Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (2 Pet 3:4). Thus God sends His messengers to nail the truth in men’s conscience. Not only do they make known what is coming, they repeatedly affirm that God will also do it.

We do well to turn our ears, hearts, and minds toward the words of Daniel, taking them into our thought processes. They speak of things that concern us, and assure our hearts of the glorious triumph of our Christ, and of our future as well.

CONCLUSION

The prophesy we have just considered is one of the central ones in the Prophets. It is remarkable for both detail and scope. By the grace of God, we are presently participating in the very kingdom Daniel announced. It is such a grand Divine enterprise, that much more will be said of it throughout this book. This is where the Divine focus has been placed – on the kingdom God Himself has set up. The focus of God has never been upon the kingdoms of men. What He declares to us, whether it is in the area of human conduct, or that of Divine purpose, His concentration is always upon what He is doing.

If men insist upon forming their own agenda, or making their own will the center of their attention, they will become blind to the working of the Lord, and deaf to His Word. It is only to the degree that we “lose” our lives for Christ’s sake, that we will find them (Matt 16:25). The unvarying requirement of the Kingdom is, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt 16:24). Again, Jesus said, “If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26).

These are not simply a harsh and inconsiderate requirements. They have been delivered to men with the predetermined purpose of God in mind. Anything that is anchored to the temporal realm, whether it be a government or a single personal desire, is destined to pass away. That does not mean men are to be simpletons, living out their lives without any attention at all being given to their needs or the needs of others. It does mean we are to live with the purpose of God in mind – with His will dominate in our thinking. We have been saved to “live unto God” (Gal 2:19).

Such a posture of life brings no disadvantage to those who embrace it. The will of God is, in every way, and from every perspective, “good and acceptable, and perfect” (Rom 12:2). It brings us the greatest advantages, the most abundant joy, and the only peace that can keep our hearts and minds. No one is ever put to a disadvantage for preferring God’s will.

If you will take hold on the word that was delivered to Nebuchadnezzar, you will find it is altogether good. Weep not that great empires and dynasties like Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome have fallen. Rejoice that when they fell it was because of the greater kingdom that God Himself set up. That is the kingdom into which you have been translated. It is the one you are in the process of receiving. It is the one into which an abundant entrance will at last be ministered to you!

The Prophecy of Daniel

NEBUCHADNEZZAR RESPONDS TO THE INTERPRETATION

Lesson #10

INTRODUCTION

Commencing with this chapter, the thrust of this book has been more finely tuned. At the first, our attention was turned to the chastening of Israel by the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, God's "servant" (1:1-2; Jer 27:6). Next, the Spirit introduced us to the four children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and the initial test of their faith (1:3-17). Their first introduction to the king is then covered, together with the manifestation of the superior wisdom and knowledge God had given to them (1:18-20). At that point, our attention was drawn to a recurring and troubling dream that Nebuchadnezzar experienced, together with his efforts to have the dream and its interpretation identified. Now, at this point, Daniel becomes the most prominent man (2:1-35).

Now, commencing with the interpretation of this dream, our minds have been turned to the God in heaven. It is His purpose that now becomes dominant, and His work that is most prominent. For the first time, the superiority of God is declared to the king.

- “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (2:37).
- “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (2:44).
- “. . . the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” (2:45).

From verse 46 through 12:13, “God” is mentioned forty-six times (2:47; 3:17,25,26,28,29; 4:2,8,9,19; 5:31, 14,18,21,23,26; 6:5; 10,11,16,20,22,23,26; 9:3,4,9,10,11,13,14,15,17,18,19,20; 10:12; 11:32,36,37)! He becomes the prominent Person of reference in the book. Although “Daniel” himself is mentioned fifty-two times, nearly all of them have to do with him being God’s prophet and representative. His prominence is strictly owing to his identity with the God of heaven.

While this may appear to be a rather simplistic observation, it is imperative that we do not ignore it. Much that is written in this book has intrigued Bible students. Because they have been distracted with its seeming novelties, some have tended to develop theological and eschatological views that have little to do with God. These views have tended to vaunt the wisdom of men, induce fear in the hearts of men, and have been largely limited to political concerns. However, Daniel was not inspired to merely give a panorama of earthly history, or elaborate upon worldly governments. Apart from the Kingdom of God, which is destined to destroy all other dominions, the kingdoms of this world have no relevance at all. The ONLY reason they are even mentioned is because they are inferior to God’s kingdom, and will be shown to be so.

A RELIGIOUS ERROR

Those who imagine worldly kingdoms will continue on after God’s people have been removed from the earth have failed to see this truth. Believers are “the salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13), and without them, the earth has no relevance whatsoever.

The Parable of the Tares of the Field

The children of God are the whole reason for the existence of the earth. Our Lord made this plain in the parable of the “parable of the tares of the field.” Jesus likened the Kingdom of heaven to “a man which sowed good seed in HIS FIELD” (Matt 13:24). He encapsulated the whole of the parable in these

words. “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels” NASB (Matt 13:37-39). His explanations are so clear, there can be no question about their meaning.

- Both tares and wheat – the sons of the kingdom and the sons of the evil one – will “grow together until the harvest,” which is “the end of the world” KJV (13:30a).
- At the “harvest,” the angels, who are “the reapers,” are sent forth to reap the earth, being told, “Gather ye together FIRST the tares” (13:30b).
- The “harvest” is also the time when “the wheat” are gathered into the barn of the sower (13:30c).
- In explaining the parable to His inquiring disciples, Jesus spoke of the wicked and righteous being together until the end, when they will be separated. “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” NASB (13:41-42). The words “His kingdom” refer to “his field,” mentioned in the parable. The wicked will be removed from the presence of the righteous, not visa versa. They will be gathered “first” out of Christ’s Kingdom, for they are the offenders and the ones who do not belong in the field, or among the righteous.
- It is THEN that “the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (13:43).

The Parable of the Great Net

Again, Jesus likened “the kingdom of heaven” to a “net that was cast into the sea.” The net gathered all manner of fish, and was drawn into shore when it was full. At that point, the “bad” were “cast away,” while, at the same time, the “good” were gathered into vessels.

Our Lord immediately gave an explanation of this brief parable, showing it emphasizes the very point He had just made concerning “the tares of the field.”

“So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 13:47-50). Again note, the wicked were removed from among the justified ones, and not the righteous from them, as some teach.

After both of His explanations had been given, Jesus asked His disciples, “Have ye understood all these things?” They answered that they did (13:51). We do well to understand them also, for what our

Lord said is highly disruptive of some very popular theology.

THE RELEVANCE OF THIS

All of this has a great deal to do with our text. The “Kingdom” of which Jesus spoke in Matthew thirteen, is the very kingdom Daniel declared would be “set up” in the days of the world’s greatest and most influential kingdoms. The demise of those kingdoms was but a prelude to the final removal of all of the wicked – those who do not willingly serve God. The very principles taught in the parables of the tares of the field and the great net are found in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and the inspired interpretation of it.

It is not possible for the devil and his children to make it so intolerable for the righteous that they must be altogether removed. That would make the field his, which it emphatically is not! In precisely the same sense that the field belonged to the Sower of the seed, who is “the Son of man,” so “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa 24:1).

The wicked will not always be with us, praise the Lord. They will be pulled up out of this world at precisely the same time those who are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord are gathered together, to forever be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:17). If there is any doubt about this matter, it is even further clarified in Second Thessalonians: There, the destruction of the wicked, and when it will occur, are precisely delineated. “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; WHEN HE SHALL COME to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” (2 Thess 1:7-10).

While the wicked will not always be among the righteous, as long as they are in this world, the righteous will always be with them. If that was not the case, there is no sense to the parables of the tares and the net, or the plain declaration of Second Thessalonians 1:7-10). A great deal of contemporary teaching concerning the coming of Christ fails to consider this circumstance. Consequently a great deal of confusion has resulted, as well as a near-total lack of preparation for the coming of the Lord. This is a most serious condition.

We will now see that even Nebuchadnezzar, who worshiped and served other gods, was able to glean this principle from Daniel’s inspired interpretation. Those who are not able to see it, even though they may wear the name of Jesus, have stooped beneath the ignorance of a heathen king.

To further complicate things, they have done so even though inspired explanations have been given. Further, those in Christ have the Holy Spirit, whom Nebuchadnezzar did not possess, and personal access to the fountain of all wisdom, which he also did not have. To be ignorant of the power and majesty of the Lord is a most serious error, for it has trampled on the words of Jesus and the exposition of the Apostle of the Gentiles. Popular or not, such views are in error, and cannot be true. Those in Christ must be able to comprehend the truth more rapidly than Nebuchadnezzar.

REAL HUMILITY

“ 2:46a Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshiped Daniel . . . ” The response of Nebuchadnezzar to Daniel’s message is most extraordinary. There is certainly no casualness about it. Daniel’s words are not treated as a mere novelty, as the Athenians considered various presentations in the Areopagus, including that of Paul the Apostle (Acts 17:19-21).

PRE-CHRISTIAN TIMES

As we view this response, it is imperative that we remember the period of time in which it occurred. This was not an age in which the blazing light of “the glorious Gospel of the blessed God” (1 Tim 1:11) was shining. The knowledge of God was, at the very best, introductory. This was particularly true in the case of Nebuchadnezzar. He will not respond as one who was acquainted with the Living God. His response will be comely, yet wholly inappropriate from the standpoint of greater spiritual light.

Circumstances Before Christ

Without a proper understanding of the times before Christ, it is not unusual to hear questions and speculations about the saints prior to the New Covenant.

- Why did earlier saints often have multiple wives?
- Was king Saul saved?
- How could God love Jacob?
- Will Solomon be in heaven or hell?
- Why did Solomon have so many wives and concubines?
- Why was there such heartless bloodshed in Israel’s confrontation of their enemies?
- Why did God command the killing of infants among the heathen?

These, and similar questions, are resolved by an understanding of the times. The knowledge of God was sparse in those days, and thus the actions of men – even those who were approved of God – fell woefully short of life as it is in Christ Jesus. In the words of Scripture, or to put in “words that the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor 2:13), “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb 11:40). The people in question were not born again, and had not been delivered from the kingdom of darkness or translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13). Their deficiencies were not owing to any inferiority in their character, but the covenant, or lack thereof, under which they lived. The Old Covenant was “not of faith” (Gal 3:12), and therefore did not yield the results of the covenant being administered by the exalted Christ – “a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6).

An inferior covenant produced inferior results. This was not owing to a flaw in the covenant itself, but those with whom it was made. As it is written, “For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant . . .” (Heb 8:8). The Old Covenant did not change human nature. It did not grant a new heart of flesh, nor remove the old heart of stone. It relied wholly upon the abilities of those with whom it was made, and was therefore “weak through the flesh” (Rom 8:3).

It should not surprise us, therefore, if crude manners were often found among those of prior times. All of this does not even take into consideration times before the Law, when there was even less understanding. If it is true that “in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:9), then wherever the knowledge of God is less, a proper sense of values is proportionately diminished. Under such circumstances, responses to revelation will occur that are vastly inferior to those that take place in the superior light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus (2 Cor 4:6).

The Relevance of these Observations

I have taken the time to make these brief comments because of the text before us. Actions will take place that do not make sense in the greater light of the Gospel of Christ, and the knowledge of God that is experienced in Him. However, even though the actions themselves are inappropriate for a person in Christ, much is to be learned from them. We will see that an acute consciousness of Deity can be experienced with relatively little illumination. All of this will serve to highlight the serious deficiency among professed Christians of our day.

FELL ON HIS FACE

“Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face . . .” This very language sounds strange in our Western culture. We live in a society that promotes purely personal interests and sings the song of self-worth. However, we must take great care not to read the Word of God with our culture in mind. When it comes to pillars of society, such as respect and honor, our age is vastly inferior to that of the patriarchs of old.

The expression “fell on his face” describes one falling to a prostrate position with the face toward the ground. It was a posture of profound respect, esteem, and honor.

- Abram “fell on his face” when God talked with him (Gen 17:3).
- When the eyes of Balaam were opened, and he saw the angel that was about to destroy him, he “fell flat on his face” (Num 22:31).

- When Joshua saw a mighty angel, described as “captain of the host of the Lord,” he “fell on his face to the earth” (Josh 5:14).
- Joseph’s brothers fell on their faces before him, confessing they were his servants (Gen 50:16).
- When Ruth confronted Boaz, she fell on her face before him, asking why she had obtained such favor (Ruth 2:10).
- When David saw his close friend Jonathan, he “fell on his face to the ground” (1 Sam 20:41).
- When Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, confronted David, “he fell on his face” (2 Sam 9:6).
- Abigail fell on her face before king David (1 Sam 25:23).
- When Obadiah, who hid a hundred prophets in a cave from the wrath of Jezebel, met Elijah, he fell on his face before him (1 Kings 18:7).
- When Peter, James, and John heard the voice of God on the mount of transfiguration, “they fell on their face, and were sore afraid” (Matt 17:6).
- When a man full of leprosy saw Jesus, he “fell on his face” before Him, asking to be made clean (Lk 5:12).
- When Jesus was in the garden, pouring out His soul, He “fell on His face, and prayed” (Matt 26:39). He was acknowledging the greatness and superiority of His Father.
- Paul spoke of a stranger, unacquainted with the ways of the Lord, coming into an assembly where “all prophesy.” As the intentions of his heart were revealed in that environment, the stranger would be seen “falling down on his face” (1 Cor 14:25).

There is a level of sensitivity that moves one to acknowledge personal inferiority. While such a practice is not common in our prideful society, it has not been strange throughout God’s dealings with humanity.

Some Conclusions

At once we see, therefore, that Nebuchadnezzar saw the gravity of the revelation he had just heard. Although a king – the greatest king in the earth – he prostrated himself before Daniel without hesitation. He was acknowledging a superior man with a superior message.

He obviously, and rightly so, associated that revelation with “the God of heaven,” of whom

Daniel had spoken.

WORSHIPED DANIEL

“ . . . and worshiped Daniel . . . ” Other versions read, “and did homage to Daniel,” NASB “and paid him honor,” NIV “done obeisance,” YLT and “gave worship to Daniel.” BBE

The word that is here translated “worshiped” (**dgIs**) is used only by Daniel (2:46; 3:5,6,7,10,11,12,14,15,18,28). It means to prostrate oneself, do homage, or worship, and is applied to both idolatry (3:5-7,10-12,14-16) and the worship of the true God (3:28).

Why Did Daniel Allow This?

One may well wonder why Daniel did not object to the king’s action. After all, when Cornelius “fell down” at Peter’s feet and worshiped him,” Peter “took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:26). When John the beloved twice prostrated himself before a holy angel, the angel admonished him, “See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10), and “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God” (Rev 22:9).

In all three of these instances, the physical act of prostration before a servant of God, whether man or angel, was strictly forbidden. Why was it allowed in our text?

Additional cases occurring prior to Christ may here be considered.

- Balaam prostrated himself before an angel and was not rebuked (Num 22:31).
- Manoah and his wife, parents of Samson, prostrated themselves before an ascending angel, and were not rebuked (Judges 13:20).
- David prostrated himself before an angel, and was not rebuked (1 Chron 21:16).

Yet, when John was on the Isle of Patmos, he was rebuked for prostrating himself before an angel. For some, these may appear to be gross contradictions. In some instances, people fell down before men, and it was received. Others fell down before a holy angel, and were not rebuked. After Christ, neither were allowed. Why?

The Explanation

This text, as well as a few others, have proved very confusing to many notable Bible scholars. They view such actions as sinful on the part of those who committed them, as well as on the part of those who received them – like Daniel.

A similar, but not identical, incident occurred in the life of Joseph. When he confronted his brothers in Egypt, he demanded that they return to him, bringing their younger brother, Benjamin. Of course, they were not aware that Joseph was speaking to them, but viewed him only as an Egyptian dignitary. Joseph's demand was couched in language that would be unacceptable in Christ. "Hereby ye shall be proved: By the life of Pharaoh ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither" (Gen 42:15). It is not proper to assess Joseph's words as though he lived in the bright light of the knowledge of God, as experienced in the New Covenant. He lived even before the Law, and is not to be judged as though he possessed what may only be had in Christ. I understand that motives, as well as understanding, are involved in this case.

The answer to these things is found in our previous consideration of "Pre-Christian Times." Prior to Christ, the knowledge of God was at a very low level – even among those in covenant with Him. The prostration of people before men and angels was part of the "ignorance" – ignorance of God – graciously overlooked by Him. As it is written, "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent" NIV (Acts 17:30).

Prior to Christ, no person was ever rebuked for prostrating himself before another man, or before a holy angel. That fact, however, by no means suggests such actions were acceptable to God. They were the result of an ignorance of God, for men simply cannot respond to a word or deed of God correctly when they do not know Him. Now, however, in this day of salvation and the blazing light of the knowledge of God in the face of Christ Jesus, an ignorance of God is unacceptable. We are not living in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, and we had better not conduct ourselves as though we were, or even in manners that are beneath his responses.

Since Jesus has been exalted, God is more fully known. In fact, unlike the Old Covenant, within the New Covenant everyone knows God, where under the Old, very few did – and even then, their knowledge was only introductory. It is said of the New Covenant, "And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest" (Heb 8:11).

Thus, because Nebuchadnezzar lived in a time of sparse revelation, and, at best, the introductory knowledge of God, he conducted himself in an inferior manner. However, even then, his action was driven by the awareness of one greater than himself.

A MAGNIFICENT MESSAGE SEEN

The magnificence of the message Daniel delivered was, in measure, grasped by Nebuchadnezzar. Immediately, he associated it with Deity, and humbled himself before the messenger. In this way he acknowledged his own mortality and inferiority.

Our age has lost this perception. Academics have actually neutered the Word of God in general, and the Gospel of Christ in particular. People can hear the report of the magnificent workings of God without any apparent impact upon their spirit. They can hear of the exceeding great and precious promises of God, and remain unmoved by their grandeur. I greatly fear that the Christianity many have embraced has actually inoculated them against spiritual sensitivity. In such a condition, they have stooped beneath the predisposition of Nebuchadnezzar the king, who was a heathen, without the knowledge of God. This is a most serious state, indicating we are in a great falling away!

One can sense the near-total absence of the awareness of Christ's superiority, and the excelling glory of the Gospel. With no apparent twinge of conscience, professed Christian teachers can make families, country, church growth, and the likes, their emphasis. Portions of Scripture that declare and expound the Gospel are abandoned in favor of Proverbs and Ecclesiastics, or texts that deal with the interrelationships of men. It is not that these things are wrong, and none should conclude that they are. However, they are to be considered within the greater light of the Gospel of Christ, and not in isolation from it. Let me state this another way.

Those who are not expert in the Gospel, cannot, by virtue of that lack, be expert in anything else. They have no light to see.

THE RESPECT OF DANIEL

“ 46b . . . and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors unto him.” Other versions read, “ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him,” NIB “gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense,” NAS “commanded that they should offer in sacrifice to him victims and incense,” DOUAY and “he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him.” NLT

Some commentators have a great deal of difficulty with this text – particularly because it contains no further explanations. It obviously does not conform to the greater understanding that we have in Christ Jesus. Some have concluded the text does not tell the whole story, but eliminates Daniel's response. BARNES Another suggests that we must assume Daniel rejected the king's order, else he was guilty of sin. CALVIN Still another suggests that Daniel must have reasoned with the king concerning

the impropriety of offering sacrifices and incense to him. JOHN GILL Another declares that no inspired writer would have written of a holy prophet receiving sacrifices and incense. J.E.H. THOMPSON

Here again, we confront an action that is strictly forbidden under the Gospel of Christ. On one occasion, when Paul and Barnabas were preaching in Lystra, Paul saw a man “cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked.” It is written that Paul perceived this man “had faith to be healed.” The man had fastened his attention upon Paul, and was listening intently to him. Suddenly Paul shouted out in a loud voice, “Stand upright on thy feet!” Immediately, the man “leaped and walked.” When the people saw “what Paul had done” they concluded, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.” They then referred to Barnabas as Jupiter (Zeus), and Paul as Mercurius (Hermes), because he was the chief speaker. The local priest of Jupiter, or Zeus, “brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.” As soon as “the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein” (Acts 14:7-15).

Why was the response of Paul and Barnabas apparently different than that of Daniel – if, indeed, it was? I suggest it was owing to the lesser spiritual light in Daniel’s day. That does not make what occurred there right – it does make it tolerable for the time, allowing God to “wink at,” or overlook it.

THE SUPERIORITY OF LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST

Once again, I want to emphasize the superiority of the revelation that has been brought to us through Christ Jesus. The Son of God did not come to provide more precisely defined morality. Nor, indeed, did He come to provide mankind with a new set of rules. From the standpoint of provision, He came to “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb 9:26). Considered from yet another perspective, He came to “bring us to God” (1 Pet 3:18). From yet another view, it was to expound and clarify the Father.

- “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. ” (Mat 11:27)
- “All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him .” (Luke 10:22)
- “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him .” (John 1:18)
- “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me : or else believe me for the very works' sake.” (John 14:10-11)

One of the primary ministries of Jesus is to dispel the ignorance of God, such as prevailed during the times of Daniel. Prior to Moses, that ignorance was at an even more extensive level – and Nebuchadnezzar was woefully ignorant of the Law, which was “given by Moses” (John 1:17).

AN OBSERVATION

Our view of this text must not impeach the integrity and faith of Daniel. Neither must it allow us to diminish the significance of Nebuchadnezzar’s response. The king made an association between Daniel and his God. He did not consider Daniel himself to be God, as those in Lystra considered Paul and Barnabas. We will see from his statement that while he did highly regard Daniel, he was the more impressed with his great God. We must, then, allow the words of Nebuchadnezzar to interpret what he ignorantly did.

OF A TRUTH

“ 47a The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods . . .” How will the king respond to the inspired interpretation of the dream given to him by the God that is “in heaven?” He has heard about the demise of his own kingdom – that it will be replaced by a kingdom inferior to his own. He has heard that he is like a head of gold that will be supplanted by a kingdom likened to a breast and arms of silver. Will he lash out against Daniel, or order his death?

THE KING ANSWERED

“ The king answered unto Daniel .” First, note the king responds to what was told him. He does not remain in silence, and for that he is to be commended. When Elijah challenged the people to choose that very day who they would serve, Baal or God, “the people answered him not a word” (1 Kgs 18:21). When God called out to Israel through their prophets, they did not respond: “I called you, but ye answered not” (Jer 7:13). Does this condition still exist?

Nebuchadnezzar the heathen will provide an excellent example for all who are made aware of the purpose of God. He was told of the demise of four world empires, starting with his own. We have been told of the ultimate overthrow of all kingdoms, all flesh, all enemies, and all who compete with God. We do well to not allow Nebuchadnezzar to be more excellent in his response than we, who are living in the brilliance of the “Sun of righteousness,” who has arisen “with healing in His wings” (Mal 4:2).

OF A TRUTH

“ . . . Of a truth . . . ” Other versions read, “Truly” NKJV “Surely,” NASB “verily,” DOUAY and “indeed.” NJB This is another way of saying, “There is no doubt about it,” or “I do not question what you have said,” or “I can see the truth of what you have declared!”

And what sort of evidence did the king have? He had a dream that he could not remember on his own. He heard a man of God tell him the dream that he had, refreshing his mind with the vividness of it all. He also had a word – and only a word – that delineated the dream, telling the king what it meant. Daniel did not work a sign before him like Moses did before Pharaoh (Ex 7:9-10). There was no fleece spread before Nebuchadnezzar like Gideon spread before the Lord (Judges 6:37-39). There was no remarkable phenomenon, such as occurred on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4), or in Samaria (Acts 8:6), or in Lystra (Acts 14:10). No miracles were wrought by the hand of Daniel as with Stephen, who was full of faith and power (Acts 6:8). No one in the king’s court was healed, as Publius on the island of Melita (Acts 28:8). There was no lame man at his gate to attest to the truth, as the one who was healed at the gate called “Beautiful” (Acts 3:2-7). Yet, the response of Nebuchadnezzar will exceed some of the responses following those great miracles.

Here was a haughty man reduced to humility and the confession of the greatness of God. That is how powerful the Word of God is!

Those who have an inordinate penchant for miracles will have to account for the response of Nebuchadnezzar. He said these things before Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from the fiery furnace (3:23-26). There had been no dramatic miracle wrought before the king at this point. Yet, the words of Daniel were accompanied with such power, that the king gave forth a response that honored God and affirmed the godliness of Daniel.

The Power of the Gospel

I cannot help but note here the notable and more excellent power of the Gospel of Christ. If the relating of a dream, and the interpretation of it brought Nebuchadnezzar to such a profound conclusion, what will the Gospel of Christ do for those who receive it? It, and it alone, is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). When it is preached with power, if it does not elicit a response that is even better than that of the king of idol-worshipping Babylon, a most serious deficiency exists in the people.

I say these things because of circumstances with which most of us are familiar. Even though people have heard a message that is far superior to that which delivered to Nebuchadnezzar, his response so far transcends the average reaction to the Gospel that it is fearful to consider it.

GOD OF GODS

“ . . . that your God is a God of gods . . . ” Every translation reads precisely the same: “God of gods.” Moses also referred to God in this way. “For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords

. . .” (Deu 10:17). Joshua also spoke of the Lord in this manner. “The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods . . .” (Josh 22:22). The “sweet Psalmist of Israel” wrote, “O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever” (Psa 136:2). Later, in further unveiling the future to Daniel, a heavenly prince referred to God as “the God of gods” (11:36).

This is, then, an inspired view – a heavenly perspective. Yet, Nebuchadnezzar, who was hardly noted for being heavenly minded, referred to God in this manner – the same manner as Moses, Joshua, and David. There is no doubt in my mind that God was working with this heathen king, showing him things that precious few people in the previous history of the world had seen, much less of which they had been convinced.

Inherent in this expression is the idea that God is against all false gods. He will eventually dash them all to the ground, for they are against Him, His Son, and His people.

What gods?

There is a sense in which there are really no other gods. Is it not written, “Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any” (Isa 44:8). Again it is written, “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God” (Isa 44:6). And again, “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me” (Isa 45:5). And again, “I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me” (Isa 46:9).

These expressions speak of the nature of God – that there is none other who are self-existent, possess all power, and do their own will without anyone being able to stop its fulfillment. There are no other Gods in that sense – none who are worthy of service, and who alone can save and destroy, create darkness and light, and bring calamity or blessing (Isa 45:7).

However, there ARE “other gods,” even though none of them are equal to the true God. The phrase “other gods” is mentioned sixty three times in Scripture (Ex 20:3; 23:13; Deut 5:7; 6:14; 7:4; 8:19; 11:16,28; 13:2,6,13; 17:3; 18:20; 28:14,36,64; 29:26; 30:17; 31:18,20; Josh 23:16; 24:2,16; Judges 2:12,17,19; 10:13; 1 Sam 8:8; 26:19; 1 Kgs 9:6,9; 11:4,10; 14:9; 2 Kgs 5:17; 17:7,35,37,38; 22:17; 2 Chron 7:19,22; 28:25; 34:25; Jer 1:16; 7:6,9,18; 11:10; 13:10; 16:11,13; 19:4,13; 22:9; 25:6; 32:29; 35:15; 44:3,5,8,15; Hos 3:1).

The Corinthians Church

The Corinthian church had some members who were not yet aware there was only one true God. Still juvenile in their faith, they thought there were other God’s who were competitors with the Living God – in some sense equal to Him. Addressing this situation Paul wrote, “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom

are all things, and we by Him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge : for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled” (1 Cor 8:5-7).

Elsewhere, the Scriptures inform us that idols are related to demons, and those who sacrifice to them offer their sacrifices to demons. “Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons” NKJV (1 Cor 10:20). Moses also confirmed this to be the case. “They shall no more offer their sacrifices to demons , after whom they have played the harlot. This shall be a statute forever for them throughout their generations.” NKJV (Lev 17:7). And again, “They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; With abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons , not to God, To gods they did not know, To new gods, new arrivals That your fathers did not fear” NKJV (Deu 32:17). Again, it is said of Rehoboam, “Then he appointed for himself priests for the high places, for the demons , and the calf idols which he had made” NKJV (2 Chr 11:15). The Psalmist wrote, “They even sacrificed their sons And their daughters to demons ” NKJV (Psa 106:37). The book of Revelation also records this dreadful idolatry. “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons , and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk” NKJV (Rev 9:20).

There is a very real spiritual underworld, dominated by powerful, yet inferior personalities. The Spirit informs us that we are engaged in a conflict with these forces. “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). Two of these powerful personalities are mentioned in Daniel: “the prince of Persia,” and “the prince of Grecia” (Dan 10:20). Perhaps these were nothing less than the gods of these nations, to whom they offered their sacrifices and yielded their lives.

GOD IS OVER ALL

The phrases “God of gods” and “Lord of lords” (Deut 10:17; 136:3; 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14; 19:14), declare that the God of heaven is over all of these powers. They answer to Him and are controlled to the most minute degree by Him. None of them can exist one millisecond longer than He intends, or work one tiny deed that He does not allow. He is over them all, and they are neither able to resist Him or impose their will upon Him.

The very casting of Satan out of heaven confirms this to be the case. All of these “gods,” who, in the fullest sense of the word, are no gods at all, are under the immediate auspices of the devil. They are not stronger than him, and function under his leadership. Yet, with no difficulty whatsoever, the devil has been cast out of heaven and “into the earth.” To confirm his utter inferiority, it was not even God Himself that cast him out, but “Michael and his angels,” who are willing servants of the true God (Rev 12:7-9). On one occasion, when the Gospel was beginning to spread, and Satan’s kingdom was being assaulted, the Lord Jesus said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10:18). The Lord is “the God of gods.” Nebuchadnezzar knew it,. And we do well to know it also.

APPLYING THE TRUTH

One of the qualities of truth is its application, or relevance. There is not truth for you and truth for me, or truth for the first century and truth for the twenty-first century. Truth is always relevant, pertinent, and important.

Take this bit of understanding: God is the God of gods. Consider the areas of the world where great persecution of Christians is occurring. Much of it is being done in the name of a god – like Allah, or his prophet Mohammed. Some is done in the name of other heathen gods, which are really no gods at all. Let there be no pretension here: we do not have answers to all of the questions concerning WHY these persecutions are taking place. However, we pray for our suffering brethren, knowing that God is the God of the gods being served by their persecutors. All it requires is a word from God, and it will all end – just like Israel’s bondage in Egypt ended.

Consider the political threats that have become common in our country. The destruction of the Trade Center, the threat of chemical warfare, and nuclear attack. None of these things are exempt from Divine control. Those who take the lives of the innocent and spread violence over the earth are not doing the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. They are vassals of Satan, and are serving “other gods.” But God is over them. He is the “God of gods.”

Wherever there is a child of God who is suffering unjustly, or for righteousness sake, the enemy is at work. But that work is duly observed by “the God of gods,” and will eventually give way to His word. When the Lord says, “It is enough” (1 Chron 21:15) , the enemy will crumble and fall!

This is precisely why Paul could look at his own suffering and imprisonment and say, “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:19). He knew more fully than Nebuchadnezzar did, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is “the God of gods.” You can know it also, and bathe your weary soul in its refreshing waters. When this is known fully, it become usable!

LORD OF KINGS

“ 47b and a Lord of kings . . . ” What a marvelous expression! Again, nearly every version says the same thing: “Lord of kings.” Two exceptions are the New Living Translation and the New Jerusalem Bible – but they maintain the sense of the text: “The Lord over kings,” NLT and “the Master of kings.” NJB Again, by being “Lord” of the kings, it is clear that a natural enmity exists between them and the Lord. This is confirmed in the dream given to Nebuchadnezzar. In it, the kingdom of God is declared to

have decimated the kingdoms of men. That was a vivid depiction of the God of heaven being “the Lord of kings.” They could not stand before Him, but were crushed and entered into oblivion when His Kingdom confronted theirs.

A number of times the Lord is referred to as the “King of kings” (1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14; 19:16). The heavens rule over the earth, and God rules over all the kings of the earth. It is written, “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure” (Psa 2:2-5).

The Wisdom of Solomon

The superiority of the Lord to the kings of the earth is seen in Solomon, who received wisdom from the Lord. That wisdom did not include insight into redemption, nor was it filled with an understanding of eternal matters. Yet, it was so far advanced to the best wisdom of this world that even kings had to admit it. It is written, “And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom” (1 Kgs 4:34).

Likewise, the Queen of Sheba acknowledged the superiority of Solomon’s wisdom. After she had heard what he said, and beheld the grandeur of his kingdom, this is what occurred . “Then she said to the king: “It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard” NKJV (1 Kgs 10:6-7). That was nothing less than an acknowledgment that God is the “Lord of kings” – not only of Solomon, but of all others as well. As it is written, “And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart ” (2 Chron 9:23). When he displayed that wisdom, God was praised.

Whenever the kings of the earth are knowingly in the presence of the great God of heaven, “He is awesome to the kings of the earth” (Psa 76:12). Because He is their Lord, He has even exalted His Son, His “Firstborn,” “higher than the kings of the earth” (Psa 89:27). The Lord Jesus truly is “the Prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:5). This word will surely be fulfilled, whether it appears to be likely or not: “All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth” (Psa 138:4).

NOT THE HIGHEST VIEW

This is not the highest view of our God, although it is a lofty one! In chapter three, Nebuchadnezzar will straightway forget what he has said in chapter two. I doubt not that he was fully convinced of the truth his words at the time. However, because they were on a lower level, they got away from him more quickly.

The Lord is best and more clearly seen “in the face of Christ Jesus” (2 Cor 4:6). The more clearly

Christ is seen, the more precise is our vision of God, and the more difficult it is to forget Him. Those who see something of God, only to quickly forget it, have not beheld Christ Jesus as He is – at least not to any measurable degree. Make no mistake about this, God is all powerful, and nothing can stand against Him. However, unless something more than that is known of Him, few Divine advantages will be realized. The greatness of our God, and the subservience of all people and things to Him, is what enables Him to work salvation in the midst of the earth (Psa 74:12). It is why He is able to keep believers from falling, cause them to stand, and prepare a table before them in the presence of their enemies (Jude 24-25; Rom 14:4; Psa 23:5).

Unless there is a dominating interest in the salvation of God, knowing He is God of gods and Lord of kings will remain encapsulated in lifeless human theology. Such knowledge, intended to have a glorious and lasting impact upon the human spirit, will, in such a case, become the subject of debate and philosophy. It will yield no benefit to the individual. One does not have to look far before confronting these conditions.

A Tragedy of the Times

One of the great tragedies of our times is that few professing Christians have seen God as heathen Nebuchadnezzar did. It is not unusual to find Christians unduly concerned about enemies who worship false gods, and kings who speak brashly against those who believe on Christ. It is not possible for those who suffer from such minuscule thoughts of God to have any clear understanding of salvation. Because of their fundamental ignorance of God, they are shut up to confusion and ignorance about such things as justification, sanctification, reconciliation, the end of the world, and the power of faith. Just as the knowledge of God sheds light upon all of these things, so the ignorance of God causes darkness to cover them all, so they cannot be clearly seen.

We must not be content with this situation. There is a great deal of work to be done in our day. War must be declared on the ignorance of God among the professed people of God. It is one thing for an altar to be found in Athens with the inscription, “the unknown god.” It is quite another for Him to be unknown among those who claim identity with His Son. Yet, all across this country, there are church people who are abysmally ignorant of the Living God. They do not know how He thinks, what He loves, or what He hates. In many such churches, Nebuchadnezzar would actually be a welcomed teacher, having a more lofty view of God than is common.

It may appear as though this is too harsh, but it is not. God has already revealed Jesus will come the second time “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Th 1:8). He has addressed the church, declaring it is shameful to have members who are lacking in their knowledge of God. “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame” (1 Cor 15:34). Further, those who live in a state of the “lust of concupiscence,” or “lustful passion” NASB are declared to be living “even as the Gentiles which know not God” (1 Th 4:5).

It is difficult to conceive of a more serious condition. This is the circumstance that provokes people to be “angry with God” because their lives are not going as they desire. Even though religious simpletons tell such people God understands, and is able to handle their foolish anger, such souls are in

serious danger. If “whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Mat 5:22), how do you suppose it will fair for a person who dares to be angry with God “without a cause?” The truth of the matter is that such poor souls are suffering from an ignorance of God. What is more, they are doing so while the Son of God is enthroned in glory, desiring to show to the sons of men the glory of the Father and His great salvation. Such a state is not innocent because it is caused by unbelief. It is simply inexcusable because it requires the truth to be denied and the Spirit grieved

A REVEALER OF SECRETS

“ 47c . . . and a Revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.” Another version reads, “a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.” Keep in mind, all of the wise men and gods of Babylon failed to make known the most elemental part of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, or what it meant. When he first tested Daniel and his friends, they proved to be “ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm” (Dan 1:20). But that was nothing in comparison to what Daniel had just completed. As Daniel himself had already pointed out, the knowledge of the dream, together with its interpretation was not “revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living” (Dan 2:30). Rather, it was 100% owing to “the God in heaven that revealeth secrets” (2:28). Now Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the very thing Daniel had previously declared to him.

A REVEALER OF SECRETS

This aspect of the Divine nature is marvelous! God reveals things that cannot otherwise be known. Further “the things that are revealed” belong to the ones to whom they have been revealed (Deut 29:29). That is, Divine revelations are given in order that they may be appropriated. They are never intended to become museum pieces or sources of fleshly pride.

How Did the King Know?

“ . . . seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.” The evidence of God’s ability to reveal secrets was the word delivered by Daniel. Here is a most excellent example of letting our light shine before men. Did not Jesus exhort us, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works , and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:16). In this case, the good work was Daniel speaking forth what God had made known to him. What follows is Nebuchadnezzar glorifying the Father who is in heaven.

From this we see that “good works” are defined by Divine objective, not human assessment. Men will only glorify God for what they see Him doing through His people.

Discretionary

The revelations of God are discretionary. They do not come automatically, and they are not granted to everyone. That is precisely why Nebuchadnezzar confessed what he did. He knew Daniel alone received the revelation. Nebuchadnezzar could not obtain it on his own. In fact, even Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not receive the revelation. It was given to Daniel, and to Daniel alone.

- It was said of Samuel when he was yet young, “Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him” (1 Sam 3:7).
- Later, “the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the LORD” (1 Sam 3:21).
- God revealed to David that He was going to make a house for David (2 Sam 7:27).
- Isaiah equated believing with the arm of the Lord being “revealed” (Isa 53:1).
- Before Simeon, a just and devout man, blessed the babe Jesus “it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ” (Luke 2:26).
- Jesus said God revealed precious things to “babes,” but hid them from the “wise and the prudent” (Matt 11:25).
- When Peter confessed Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Jesus told him, “flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Mat 16:17).
- Concerning the things God has prepared for those who love Him, “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10).

In all of these matters, as well as the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the “secret” was the very thing God revealed. To put it another way, if God had not revealed it, the matter would have forever remained a secret.

A Known Aspect of God

Throughout history, those who have walked with God have known this aspect of His character: He makes things known! This is more than a unit of information – something to be handily added to a theological system. Nebuchadnezzar concluded God was a Revealer because of what He made known to Daniel. There is no record, however, of him relying upon this reality, or imploring the Lord to make things known to him. Notice how what he did with this morsel of knowledge compares with the

righteous of the ages.

- MOSES. Knowing the nature of the Lord, Moses pled, “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people” (Exo 33:13). Again, encouraged by what he knew of the Lord, Moses asked, “I beseech thee, show me thy glory” (Exo 33:18).
- DAVID. Being acquainted with the Lord, David asked much the same thing as Moses. “ Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day” (Psa 25:4-5).
- THE SONS OF KORAH. Noted for their singing, and also being acquainted with the Lord, these sons prayed, “ Show us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation” (Psa 85:7).
- JEREMIAH. This weeping prophet, charged with the responsibility of heralding the Babylonian captivity, also challenged the people to seek for the Lord to make things known to them. “And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us: That the LORD thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do” (Jer 42:3).
- PAUL. In his faithful ministry to the body of Christ, Paul made known he was praying the Lord would reveal things to His people. “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know . . .” (Eph 1:17-18). Again, he made known his prayers for the Colossians. “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9).

Here is another area where the New Covenant offers benefits never before realized. With sin removed, the redeemed have received a new heart and spirit – both of which are capable of taking hold of the hidden things of God. We know that God has “prepared” remarkable and glorious things for those who “love Him” (1 Cor 2:9). Now, through the Holy Spirit, He is making those things known to the ones for whom they are prepared – the ones who “love Him.” There is no reason why believers should remain in a fundamentally ignorant state about these things.

God has prepared things for those who love Him, and He desires to make them known. His great salvation has made full provision for His children to know His will, and have a clearer vision of Himself. If God made known to Nebuchadnezzar what He was doing in the earth, you can imagine what He will reveal to those who love Him, and are the called according to His purpose!

Nebuchadnezzar only had a word!

I want to stress this once again. Nebuchadnezzar only had a word . Daniel offered no visible proof that what he said was the truth – he simply declared a word. However, the power of Almighty God accompanied that word. There was power present to persuade Nebuchadnezzar that what Daniel said was the truth. There was power to unveil to the heathen king the greatness of the one God with whom he was not acquainted. That Divine power subdued any outbreak of foolishness. It mellowed the king so he would not break forth in anger as he did with the wise men, astrologers, and magicians.

It is staggering to ponder what great power accompanies the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and how great things can be made known to those who hear it in faith. It caused some who murdered the Son of God to cry out, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). It moved an Ethiopian eunuch to ask, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (Acts 8:36). It enabled the Thessalonians to turn to God from idols, to serve Him, and to wait for His Son from heaven (1 Thess 1:9-10).

If good results could come from telling of the demise of worldly kingdoms, what will result from the announcement of the “glorious Gospel of the blessed God?” (1 Tim 1:11). As we devote ourselves to the proclamation of the good news, we will provide opportunity for men to glorify God. The Spirit and power of God accompany that glorious message. We must learn to reckon on that fact.

DANIEL IS MADE A GREAT MAN

“ 48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.” Not only does Nebuchadnezzar extol the Lord who gave the word, he also recognizes the man of God through whom the word came. The feet of those who bring good news are ever “beautiful,” and precious to those who hear the message (Rom 10:15). God never gives a word through a person without that person being duly recognized. While we are not to vaunt men, we are to give honor to whom honor is due.

It has always been the Lord’s manner to exalt those who have received His word and faithfully discharged what they were commanded. Who can forget men like Noah whose only claim to fame was that he obeyed God, building an ark to the saving of his house (Heb 11:7). Abraham is well known among those who believe God, even though his most noble achievement was that he “believed God” (Rom 4:3). Moses was lauded because he faithfully gave the Law to the people, and led them through the great and terrible wilderness (John 1:17; Isa 63:12).

Now we will see Daniel promoted. On the surface this promotion came from Nebuchadnezzar.

However, we must ever remember, “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psa 75:6-7). In our text, the great God of heaven has put down the Babylonian wise men, and will now set up Daniel the faithful one.

DANIEL MADE A GREAT MAN

“Then the king made Daniel a great man . . .” Other versions read, “the king promoted Daniel,” NKJV “the king placed Daniel in a high position,” NIV and “the king gave Daniel high honors.” RSV

In a moment of time, Daniel’s status was dramatically changed. From a relatively unknown Hebrew counselor, he was vaulted to kingdom prominence. He gave what the Lord had given to him, and, in the words of Jesus, it was given back to him “good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38).

A “great man” is one who is so regarded. That is, such honors were bestowed upon Daniel that he became prominent and well known. Ultimately, this favor came from God, although it was conferred by Nebuchadnezzar. In doing this, the king was carrying out what he had promised, thereby showing he was a man of his word: “But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor : therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof” (Dan 2:6). Daniel was advanced to a post of great dignity. He had honored God, and now God was honoring him. Through a prophet the Lord said, “them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Sam 2:30).

The Attitude of the King

The truth of God has had a humbling effect upon Nebuchadnezzar. It appears he has hardly any regard for himself, but focuses his attention upon the exaltation of Daniel. When men believe the truth of God it does have a humbling effect upon them. They thus obtain a high regard for those who have delivered the truth to them.

There are several men in Scripture who were particularly exalted because of their association with the Living God. The circumstances are remarkable.

- ABRAHAM. From a mere son of Terah to the father of a great nation, being blessed by God and obtaining a great name (Gen 12:2-3).
- JOSEPH. From a slave in prison to the prince of Egypt (Gen 41).

- MOSES. From an exile to the one who gave the Law of God (Ex 3:7-10).
- AARON. From a slave to the high priest of God (Ex 28).
- SAUL. From obscurity to king (1 Sam 9-10).
- DAVID. From the sheepcotes to the throne (Ex 3:10-22; 2 Sam 7:8).
- JEROBOAM. From a slave to the throne (1 Kgs 11:26-35).
- ELISHA. From plowing a field to a mighty prophet of God (1 Kgs 19:19-20).
- BAASHA. From out of the dust to a prince over the people (1 Kgs 16:1-2).
- DANIEL. From captive to premier (Dan 2:47).
- SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNIGO. From unknown captives to key positions in the province of Babylon (Dan 3:30).

If there is any doubt about the greatness of God, ponder the unlikely promotion of these men! In every case, their whole condition changed within a brief period of time. And who can forget Peter, Andrew, James, and John, who were moved from fisherman to Apostles in a single day (Matt 4:18-22). And, who can forget Levi (also called Matthew, Matt 9:9), who moved from being a tax collector to an Apostle with the utterance of two words: “Follow me” (Mark 2:14).

Let every soul learn from the prophet Daniel that their labor is not vain in the Lord! As it is written, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58). Faithfulness always brings Divine benefits, and no individual is capable of imagining how significant they can be.

MANY GIFTS

“ . . . and gave him many great gifts . . .” Nebuchadnezzar had not only promised honor for the one who told him his dream and the interpretation of it, but gifts as well: “ye shall receive gifts and rewards” (Dan 2:6). Now the king fulfills his promise, giving him “many great gifts.” The NIV reads, “the king . . . lavished many gifts upon him.”

Some years later, when Daniel interpreted the writing on the wall for Belshazzar, he was also offered gifts. That time Daniel did not receive them. Rather, his response was, “Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation” (Dan 5:17). Of course there was a small difference in the cases. Belshazzar sought to obtain the interpretation through gifts, while Nebuchadnezzar responded to the interpretation with gifts. If Daniel had provided the meaning of the handwriting on the wall after receiving gifts, he

could have been viewed like Balaam, who prophesied for wages 2 Pet 2:15). No such motive can be ascribed to Daniel in our text. He did not speak for a reward, but because he was moved by the God of heaven to do so.

I gather the gifts included things like royal clothing, gold, silver, precious stones, and perhaps real estate. Daniel received the gifts, but was never known for being a covetous or grasping man. Like Abraham, Job, and Joseph, he knew how to handle great riches (Gen 13:2; Job 1:3; Gen 41:41-43).

RULING THE WHOLE PROVINCE

“. . . and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon . . .” This is a most remarkable promotion – especially when you consider the greatness of Babylon. The kingdom of the Chaldeans was divided into provinces, and Babylon was the chief one of them. It was the heart of the empire, and the seat of government – something like Washington DC is to the United States.

You can see the confidence that Nebuchadnezzar had in Daniel. He saw no threat of usurpation in him. He did not regard him to be a potential leader of an insurrection among the local captive Jews. Daniel was, in a very real sense, “approved of men” (Rom 14:18). He had proved himself faithful to the Lord, and thus even his enemies were made to be a peace with him (Prov 16:7). You must not forget that Nebuchadnezzar is the king who brought Daniel as a captive into Babylon (1:1-6). Yet, at the time of our text, one could scarcely imagine that such a thing had taken place.

This account should generate hope in the hearts of all believers. Let them not be discouraged concerning their circumstances. If they are something less than desirable, they can change just as surely as those of Daniel changed.

RULER OF THE GOVERNORS AND WISE MEN

“. . . and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.” An additional promotion involved Daniel being “chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon” NKJV (Dan 2:48). Among other things, this confirms the wise men had not been eliminated from the empire. The phrase “chief of the governors ,” suggests there was some form of grouping of Babylon’s wise men and counselors – something like our senate and house of representatives.

Here we see a dramatic turn of events. In the beginning, Daniel and his comrades were taught “the language and literature of the Chaldeans” (1:4). Now, the wise men of the whole empire have a Jewish prophet over them – one who has proved faithful to the Lord in every way. He refused to defile himself with the king’s food. He faithfully declared the word of the Lord to the king, even though it spoke no blessing upon the king.

We may very well surmise Daniel will do not less in his new position. There will now be a certain moral influence present in Babylon. Prophetic words will be spoken in high places, and a sense of the greatness of the God of heaven will be had. And all of this happened in a period of time, being accomplished through a heathen king.

A REQUEST FOR HIS COMPANIONS

“ 49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.” How will Daniel respond to all of this? Before this, he was a slave in training. Now he is a key political official. Before this, he was a child of the state, with little or no possessions of his own. Now he is a man of substance, having received many impressive gifts. What will be the reply of the man of God?

THE EXTREMES OF LIFE

Many souls cannot handle a sudden influx of possessions and power. Countless immature people have plummeted to the bottom of the economic and social ladder when they came into wealth, prosperity, and influence. They simply could not handle it. The wisdom of Solomon regarding these things is noteworthy. “Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain” (Prov 30:8-9). He knew there was no virtue or advantage at the extremities of life in this world – “poverty” and “riches.” There is no more advantage to being poor than there is to being rich, notwithstanding the views of simple people. Solomon declared why he thought this way, and he was employing the wisdom God gave to him. Being “poor,” he reasoned, would tempt him to “steal, and take the name of my God in vain.” Being “rich,” he concluded, would tempt him to be “full,” denying the Lord and saying, “Who is the LORD?” In such a case, he might have thought he alone was responsible for his affluent state.

ADAPTING THROUGH FAITH

Of course, in Christ Jesus people can adapt to both extremes – poverty and riches. They need not be overcome by either – particularly if they view them as classrooms in which they are taught by God. Thus Paul confessed, “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil 4:11-13).

Daniel had experienced both extremes – poverty and riches – and he did so admirably. Now we will see that, like love, he does not seek his own (1 Cor 13:5). His faith will equip him to handle

authority to the glory of God.

DANIEL REQUESTED THE KING

“Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon.” Surely this is bold request, and it is asked at the threshold of Daniel’s new position! Daniel himself has been made the “ruler over the whole province of Babylon.” Now, as his first official act, he requests that the other three children of Judah be “administrators over the province of Babylon.” These would be like his lieutenants, carrying out his orders for the central area and hub of the empire.

Daniel did not forget his friends, as those who think only of themselves are wont to do. These three young men had labored with him in prayer for the revelation of the king’s matter. Now, they will share in the spoils of victory. They were like those of David’s day who “abode by the stuff,” or “stayed with the baggage” (1 Sam 25:13). When the spoils of war were distributed, David did not forget those men. His judgment was placed into a permanent statute in the land. “But as his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike. So it was, from that day forward; he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel to this day” (1 Sam 30:24-25). Thus, in the spirit of king David, Daniel shares the spoils with his faithful companions.

Although the text does not say so here, we learn later that Nebuchadnezzar did place Daniel’s friends over the affairs of Babylon. The next chapter will draw that to our attention, when these three men refuse to bow before a golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar. Their critics told the king, “There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (Dan 3:12). Together with Daniel, these men had already proved themselves “ten times wiser” than the most astute wise men in Babylon. The king, therefore, will only be the better for putting them in responsible positions.

I cannot help but note the sharp conflict of these appointments with the manner of our Western world, including its churches. Here, the most powerful ruler in the world made appointments based upon two things: performance and recommendation. The same thing occurred with Joseph in Egypt. The thought has often occurred to me that none of the four Nebuchadnezzar appointed over his affairs would be accepted in the average church or Christian institution. Perhaps that is one of the reasons we are suffering from such a wave of spiritual mediocrity.

Should you ever have the opportunity to be placed in a higher position, conduct yourself in such a manner that you will not be ashamed to stand before Joseph, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the great and notable day of the Lord! You will then be a source of blessing like Daniel.

CONCLUSION

The text before us has been a notable one. In it we have seen the power of a faithful witness. Faith removes the fear of man, which “bringeth a snare” (Prov 29:25). It also enables believers to be wise and considerate in their responses. Social blunders are largely owing to a lack of faith and insight, both of which are available in abundance to the child of God (2 Thess 1:3; James 1:5).

Behold how things were worked together for the good of Daniel. He has a message that declares the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar will be replaced by one that is inferior. According to the flesh, that would be a message you would want to keep quiet – particularly if it was not going to take place for a while. However, when it is delivered precisely as the Lord had given it, the king actually rewards Daniel with a place of honor, great gifts, political power, and an opportunity to have his friends elevated also. That is how the Lord works, causing things to fall out for the advantage of His people.

Thus God can cause a harsh decree to fail. He can melt the heart of an angry king. He can cause a king to see the greatness of God, confess it, and decree that His prophet be exalted.

Add to this that God’s word will not return to Him void. It will accomplish what it has been sent to do, even though spoken by a young and untenured man to a seasoned global monarch (Isa 55:11).

Those who are tempted to modify the Word of the Lord, making it palatable for the world, do well to sit at the feet of Daniel. No good purpose would have been served by Daniel reducing the power of the message he had been given – toning it down so it would not be abrasive. In fact, that would have been a transgression of the greatest magnitude. If God says the kingdoms of this world will be crushed into oblivion by His own Kingdom, what purpose would be served by modifying the message, or possibly omitting some of its details? Such a practice is reprehensible.

If you are a worker for the Lord, be a faithful one. Speak the message as it is, for “it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor 4:2). You will find that God is faithful, giving you the very best when you are faithful.

The Prophecy of Daniel

THE SECOND TEST BY THE KING'S DECREE

Lesson #11

INTRODUCTION

Through the power of God, Daniel has unveiled a magnificent and detailed prophecy of the future of global powers. He has confirmed that God does not stand aloof from the affairs of men, nor is He inactive in the rise and fall of empires. Care must be taken not to view this circumstance as though the Living God is a mere observer of the activities of men. Some see the Lord as having made man with a

free will that does not allow for Divine government without human approval. God did, indeed, create man in His own image. It is that Divine imagery that provided humanity with a will. However, when we attach the word “free” to that will, the matter tends to become more complicated.

SCRIPTURAL USE OF “FREEWILL”

The word “freewill” KJV occurs seventeen times in Scripture (Lev 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num 15:3; 29:39; Deut 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23; 2 Chron 31:14; Ezra 1:4; 3:5; 7:13,16; 8:28; Psa 119:108). The NKJV adds one more reference (Amos 4:5). The KJV translates that text “free offerings.” The NASB and NIV adds six more references (Ex 35:29; 36:3; Lev 7:16; 2 Chron 35:8; Ezra 1:6; Ezek 46:12). The KJV uses the words “voluntary offerings,” “willing offerings,” and “willingly.”

None of these texts are a comment on man’s will. Rather, they all have to do with the willingness of men to do what they did. Thus, some offerings were called “freewill offerings” (Lev 22:16; 23:38; Num 29:39; Deut 12:6,17; 2 Chron 31:14; Psa 119:108). However, all offerings were not “freewill offerings.” In this case, “freewill” described what was given over and above the requirements.

The tithes, for example, that were given to the Levitical priesthood, were not on a freewill basis. The Israelites were obligated to give this (Num 18:24,26,28). Failure to do this constituted robbery, and God saw withholding of tithes as personally robbing Him. As it is written, “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation” (Mal 3:8-9).

THE POINT OF THIS

There is a point to this observation, and it is germane to our text. Without being distracted by other considerations, God has not relinquished the government of the world to men – even though it may appear that He has. If they do not “will” to obey Him, He can make them do so. However, that will not accrue to any blessing for them. There is coming a day when, willing or not, “every knee” shall bow to Christ, and “every tongue confess to God” (Rom 14:11). Several centuries before Christ, the Lord said through Isaiah, “I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear” (Isa 45:23). Those who imagine they will not precisely conform to that declaration are only deceiving themselves.

There are a number of examples in Scripture that announce how God actually imposed His will upon obstinate hearts. In these cases, the will of man opposed the will of God, and the Stone of Divinity forced them to live, or die, contrary to their own will. Whatever you may think about the human will, it cannot survive an encounter with the Sovereign God. No one can stand before the Lord – no one! They will bow the knee and confess with their mouth that He, and He alone, is Lord.

Adam and Eve driven out of Eden (Gen 3:24).

Cain forced to be a fugitive and a vagabond (Gen 4:12).

- The mass destruction of the world's population, with the exception of eight souls (Gen 7:21-23).
- The disruption of the building of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:8).
- Hagar and Ishmael cast out of Abraham's house (Gen 21:10-12).
- Esau was rejected, even though he sought for repentance and his former inheritance with tears (Heb 12:17).
- The will of Joseph's brothers was overturned, and the advantage given to Joseph (Gen 50:20).
- Israel comes out of Egypt in spite of Pharaoh's will (Ex 14:8).

There are an abundance of additional examples, but this will suffice to confirm there is a level of Divine involvement where the will of man is utterly impotent, and upon which the working of the Lord does not depend.

Think how Christ's birth and increase in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man, frustrated the will of the devil, demons, principalities, powers, Herod, and countless others. Make no mistake about this, for the will of God to triumph, opposing wills and purposes must be put down. This is the very point that was made known to Nebuchadnezzar! God set up His kingdom in the midst of colossal and seemingly invincible kingdoms. He did not do it when there were no official kingdoms, but when they had risen to their zenith!

The kingdom God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar did not have its genesis in man. In fact, it originated independently of man – like a stone coming out of a mountain “without hands” (2:34-35). The success of that kingdom does not rely upon men, for it is essentially “the kingdom of God,” and “of heaven.” It will triumph over all other kingdoms, even though the “wills” of those kingdoms are set against it.

Eventually, “The kingdoms of this world” will “become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15). If “the kings of the earth” are unwilling to yield their kingdoms to King Jesus, it will make no difference – Jesus will take them anyway, for He is, in very sense, “the Prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1:5). The only bearing personal attitudes have in this matter is whether or not individuals will be profited by Christ's determined rule. However, the attitudes of men have no influence whatsoever upon the kingdom itself, or its King.

Daniel has revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that the four great empires in the history of the world will be crushed under the advancing Kingdom of God. They will not merely be absorbed into this superior Kingdom, but will be destroyed by it. They will not want to yield their power to Christ, but will do so anyway. The fact that all of this is from God is emphasized by the fact that each of these worldly kingdoms is succeeded by one inferior to itself.

WE NEED TO HEAR IT!

The saints of God need to hear of this advancing and impregnable kingdom frequently. They need to be told that God has called us into an invincible Kingdom.

- How refreshing to hear our labor is not vain in the Lord. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor 15:58).
- The saints will judge the world and angels. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?” (1 Cor 6:1-2).
- Assure them that God will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. “And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen” (Rom 16:20).
- Let the saints be reminded they are being kept by the power of God to a salvation that is ready to be revealed. “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet 1:5).
- Herald the glad tidings “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38-39).
- Tell the saints that God is able to keep them from falling. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24).
- Recall to their minds that no adversarial power can remove them from the hand of Jesus – and in His hand, we are also in the hand of the Father. “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand” (John 10:28-29).
- Let us be careful to tell the people of God the kingdom is going to be given to them. “But the saints of

the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever . . . Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom . . . And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him” (Dan 7:18,22,27).

- Declare that the meek will inherit the earth. “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5).
- Tell those in Christ that they will reign with Christ. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny him, He also will deny us” (2 Tim 2:12).
- Remind the body of Christ that He that is in them is greater than He that is in the world. “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).
- Tell them in due season they will reap if they faint not. “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal 6:9).

WHY SAY THESE THINGS?

These are not high sounding words. Nor, indeed, are they unrelated to our text. They spell out for us HOW God’s kingdom will subjugate and grind to powder all completing kingdoms. These promises directly relate to the ultimate and public triumph of God’s Kingdom – the Kingdom He revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream. For him, that Kingdom was perceived only as destructive of all inimical powers. In Christ, the blessings of that very Kingdom are declared and expounded.

When a person is extricated from the course of this world, caused to stand, and at last overcomes the devil, a living testimony of the stone of Daniel is seen. The principle of life that characterizes the whole of the Kingdom, also penetrates into all of its parts. There is a sense in which each person in Christ is a sort of miniature cosmos. The triumph of Christ belongs to His Kingdom as well. The triumph of His Kingdom also belongs to each individual. When you can relate the vision expounded by Daniel to your own situation, it will edify you.

AND NOW . . .

Now we will receive a stirring reminder that the flesh cannot be reformed. Nor, indeed, can it keep hold of the things of God. The very next thing that is said of Nebuchadnezzar seems to contradict everything he has declared following the interpretation of his dream. It only confirms to our hearts that flesh cannot learn the things of God. They are too high for it, too lofty for it to grasp. It readily and easily forgets them all, choosing self over the Living God.

THE KING SETS UP AN IMAGE

“ 3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.” We do not know precisely when this occurred, except that it was after Nebuchadnezzar was told his dream and its interpretation. At the time of this incident, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were “over the affairs of the province of Babylon” (verses 12-13). Therefore, the actions of the king follow a special revelation to him of the demise of all earthly kingdoms. I suggest that considerable time may have passed, so that the effect of the king’s dream had worn off. Suffice it to say, with the passing of time, the dream that once troubled the king, and moved him to ascribe preeminence to the God of heaven, no longer dominated his mind.

HE MADE AN IMAGE

“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits . . . ” We do not know if this was the image of a man or not. The proportions of the image do not reflect that of a man – ten times taller than wide. Some have suggested it may have been an image of Bel, the principal deity of Babylon.

VALUE AND SIZE

“ . . . an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits.” The value and size of this statue are staggering. It confirms the magnificent wealth that was at Nebuchadnezzar’s disposal.

Value

This immense image was made “of gold.” Some have conjectured the entire image could not been made of gold, but must have been overlaid with gold. The Spirit does not say that, although He frequently mentions things that were overlaid with gold (Ex 25:11,13, 24,28,29,37; 30:3,5; 26:32; 1 Kgs 6:22,30). I understand the text to mean the image fashioned from gold, and not merely overlaid with gold.

Although the extent of Nebuchadnezzar’s knowledge of the Law was no doubt very limited, the fashioning of this image violated the Law – particularly because people will be required to bow to before it. “Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold” (Ex 20:23). You remember this was one of the first command’s Israel violated – at the very foot of Mount Sinai. They had Aaron make them a golden calf, then ascribed to it Divine qualities, even offering burnt offerings and peace offerings to it (Ex 32:4-6). When Moses saw it, he “returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold ” (Ex 32:31). Isaiah spoke of those who made “idols of gold” (Isa 2:20). The Revelation of John also mentions some who did

not repent , or cease to “worship demons, and idols of gold” NKJV (Rev 9:20).

Gold is valuable as a commodity, but worthless when shaped into an idol.

Size

The size of this image is impressive in any culture, and at any time. It was sixty cubits high and six cubits wide. A cubit is eighteen inches, which would make the statue ninety feet high and nine feet wide. That would be the height of a nine story building.

We are not told how this image was made, but it obviously required considerable expertise. Being ten times taller than it was wide, unusual wisdom was needed to make it stable. Whether it was built in sections, or of one solid piece, considerable engineering proficiency was essential to erect this massive image.

History records some of Nebuchadnezzar’s architectural wonders. One of them was the temple of Jupiter Belus. The quote from Herodtus that is included on this page will serve to show how Nebuchadnezzar thought of his gods – even after He knew of the true God. It also highlights the colossal nature of some of his works.

THE PLAIN OF DURA

“ . . . he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.” The location of this plain is not known. It appears the king chose this location so that the statue could be seen by all. The plain probably would accommodate the significant number of people who were required to bow before the image.

I cannot help but recall another plain, generally considered to be the very one on which Babylon was built – Shinar. There men attempted to build a tower that reached into heaven. The Lord brought an end to that project (Gen 11). How much, if any, of that tower remained, we do not know. However, it is almost as though the spirit of idolatry had lingered in that area.

FLESH CANNOT LEARN THE THINGS OF GOD

How is it that Nebuchadnezzar could build this great image, which flagrantly contradicted the revelation given to him by God? One would judge from the king’s response to Daniel’s revelation that he would never do what is recorded in this chapter. Why, after extolling the God of heaven, would he do such a thing?

The answer is found in the nature of the flesh, or the human nature. Flesh cannot learn the

things of God: it has no capacity to do so. It cannot be “trained,” so to speak, to act properly, nor can it retain a profitable remembrance of what the Lord has declared. That is precisely why it is written, “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:8). The flesh serves “the law of sin,” consistently, and without interruption (Rom 7:25). It straightway forgets the things of God to which it has been exposed, having neither the desire nor ability to retain them. The “carnal mind,” or mind-set of the flesh, is “enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be ” (Rom 8:7).

This is the why men must be “born again” – because there is no hope for the fallen nature, which is another way of saying “flesh.” Men must take the words of our Lord seriously, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again , he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit , he cannot enter into the kingdom of God . . . Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again ” (John 3:3,5,7).

Seen In Israel

The nature of the flesh is confirmed in the nation of Israel. Even though they were subjected to the most remarkable sensual phenomenon ever wrought in this world, it had no lasting impact upon them. Because this is such an important point, allow me to linger for a moment on it. Here is a sampling of the things they witnessed.

- Excluded from the dreadful plagues that came upon Egypt (Ex 8:22; 9:26; 10:23).
- Miraculous delivered from Egyptian bondage (Ex 14:8).
- Passed through the Red Sea on dry land (Ex 14:29).
- Witnessed the destruction of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea (Ex 14:28; 15:19).
- Given miraculous bread from heaven throughout their wilderness wandering of forty years (Ex 16:35).
- Drank water that gushed from a wilderness rock (Num 20:11; 1 Cor 10:4).
- They were given the Law of God by the disposition of angels (Acts 7:53).
- They were given such advantages that God challenged them, “What more could have been done to My vineyard That I have not done in it?” (Isa 5:4).

The Lord gave them judges (Acts 13:20), and prophets (Jer 7:25) – each one solemnly reminding the people of their obligation to Himself. He “reproved kings for their sakes” (Psa 105:14), defeating

their enemies with miraculous overthrows, and causing them to triumph over forces superior to themselves. Yet, in all of this, no change was wrought in the people. They remained fundamentally obstinate, rebelling against the Lord with staggering consistency.

Even though this nation was chosen by God, and nurtured and cultured with tender care, this is what He said of them. “All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Rom 10:21).

In Israel, to put it one way, we have the best of all flesh. The call of God was upon the people. They were delivered by Him, directed by Him, and favored by Him. Every possible advantage was given to them. They were preferred above all other peoples. As it is written, “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deu 7:6). Yet, after all of that preferred treatment, they were noted for murmuring (Ex 15:24; 16:2; 17:3; 1 Cor 10:10), obstinance (Ex 32:9), idolatry (Psa 106:36), immortality (2 Chron 21:11; 1 Cor 10:8), and even killing their own prophets (Matt 23:31; 1 Thess 2:15).

FLESH HAS A MIND OF ITS OWN

Unless there is some understanding of the nature of the flesh, these things tend to confuse our minds. In every way, it is unreasonable for such responses to erupt from people who had received so much. However, the flesh has a mind of its own – a particular way of thinking. It is called “the carnal mind” (Rom 8:7). This world is the domain to which it is limited, and self is the focus of its thoughts. This mind-set cannot be changed, improved, or made acceptable to God. It can neither receive nor handle the things of God.

This is why Nebuchadnezzar forgot the tremendous impact that registered upon his spirit when he first heard the meaning of his dream. He could not forget that he had a troubling dream. However, he easily forgot what the dream meant, and was incapable of drawing any conclusions from it with a lasting impact.

Does Not Excuse Nebuchadnezzar

All of this does not excuse the action of the king, but only accounts for his forgetfulness. Following the words of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar gave honor to him and exalted him. However, you will note that he claimed no allegiance to God, or chose to follow Him. He admitted He was the God gods and Lord of kings, but did not chose to serve Him.

GATHERED TO THE DEDICATION

“ 2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.”

The project now completed, the king establishes a time of dedication. All of the officials of his government were to gather together at this dedication. A most remarkable breakdown of his administration is provided in this text. There is not a clear knowledge of the specifics of this hierarchy of power. A brief overview will suffice to show the scope of delegated authority within Babylon.

PRINCES. Most other versions read “satraps.” The meaning of the word is “a ruler of provinces.” It is understood that they had extended civil jurisdiction; authority over several smaller provinces. They were responsible for maintaining order and regulating the affairs of their province. They did not control military powers, as that was a separate branch of government **MCCLINTOK**

GOVERNORS. Other versions use the word “administrators,” NKJV “prefects,” NASB “deputies,” ASV and “magistrates.” DOUAY These were high ranking officials, under “princes,” yet having significant power and authority. They were the chief representatives of the king in the various provinces.

CAPTAINS. These were commanders, probably of military chiefs in the provinces.

JUDGES. The presidents of the civil government, and those charged with guarding the country. Some consider these to be chief diviners or astrologers, using their occultic arts to rule the people.

TREASURERS. These superintended the public treasury, collecting and dispersing funds.

COUNSELORS. These were the arbiters, or counselors of the government. They were skilled in the law of the land.

SHERIFFS. These are also specialists in the law; guardians of the law, or lawyers.

RULERS OF THE PROVINCES. These were subordinate rulers, carrying out the will of the

governors.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The breakdown of authority included civil, military, and economic branches. Within those branches were those who maintained order, interpreting and enforcing the law. All of these leaders were required to come to the dedication of Nebuchadnezzar's great image.

This was a gala affair that was considered quite serious by the king. Acceptable conduct was mandatory, and no deviation was allowed. Thus, the stage is being set for another test. This time, the greater weight will fall upon Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

THE PEOPLE GATHER TO THE STATUE

“ 3 Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”

In obedience to the summons of the king, all of the officials of the empire “gathered together” for the dedication of the image. They would no doubt be expected to promote this image among those who were under their authority. Those who handled the law of the land were not to interpret it in view of this new image. Not only will the image itself be dedicated, we will find those in attendance were expected to dedicate themselves as well to this image and what it stood for.

SOMETHING TO BE NOTED

In our text, a diversity of people were gathered together in one place for a single purpose – a purpose that was not defined by those who gathered. The cause of someone else brought them together – the will of someone other than themselves.

If a gathering of this sort can occur in the flesh, how much more can it occur in the Spirit. When the Old Covenant was dedicated, the people were gathered together (Ex 19:8). When the New Covenant was dedicated, the people were also brought together (Acts 2:1). When the Lord Jesus returns, the children of God will also be gathered together (Matt 13:30; 24:31).

In each of these cases, the people were gathered together for a purpose higher than themselves.

Unlike the case of Nebuchadnezzar, in Christ such gatherings are sanctified. Therefore, they bring honor to God and edification to His people. Let every soul be more responsive to the Living God than the Babylonish leaders were to Nebuchadnezzar!

THE ORDER IS ISSUED

“ 4 Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5 That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: 6 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

The assembled host is now given a commandment. In this matter, they will be given but one choice, and the harshest penalty will be exacted upon them if they fail to obey. It is not by coincidence that the requirement is precisely the one Satan set before the Son of God when He was tempted in the wilderness. Although the devil knew he could not destroy the Son of God, he offered a more subtle incentive: “Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me ” (Mat 4:8-9).

The Impact of the Gospel

Having been raised in a society impacted by the truth of the Gospel of Christ, accounts like this are difficult to comprehend. Absolute obedience was required, and a penalty of merciless punishment was inflicted if it was not given. In such an environment one’s profession and allegiance was put to the acid test. Human rights, mercy, and the likes were not considered. For the most part, those qualities are the result of exposure to the Gospel . They are not natural human qualities, even though some have come to consider them to be so.

Prior to Christ, barbarism and ruthlessness were on a much larger scale. In the time of the flood, the inconsideration man to man had grown to epidemic proportions. How graphically this condition is portrayed in Moses’ description of that time. “The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Gen 6:11-13).

Now, in our text, even though the earth had been purged by the flood, and a fresh start experienced, humanity is seen as degenerating into the same condition. It is only because of the restraining hand of the Lord that conditions were not worse.

I therefore conclude that the further a society is from Christ, whether in time or spirit, the more fear and heartlessness dominate humanity. This very condition is seen in the proliferation of violence and inconsideration in our own country. The condition itself testifies to a serious departure from the truth of God.

A UNIVERSAL COMMAND FROM THE KING

“To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages . . .” Other versions read, “Then the herald loudly proclaimed, ‘This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language .’” NIV “People of all races and nations and languages , listen to the king's command!,” NLT and “Nations and peoples of every language .” NAB

We see from this requirement that more were involved than those within the province of Babylon itself. Conquered nations, as well as those who willingly paid tribute, were represented – “nations and languages.” This was a global requirement, for Babylon was a global power. Later, in the fourth chapter, Nebuchadnezzar will issue another decree to “all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth” (4:1).

Those who fear “one world government” and a universal ruler, must realize that is exactly what Shadrach, Meshach, And Abednego were confronting. They were not delivered from such a tyrant, but required to keep their faith in such a global government with a single ruler. Some imagine that such a condition (one world government with one ruler) can only occur after the people of God have been removed from the earth. However, our text has the saints very much in the earth, simultaneous with a single sovereign government and king – both of which were heathen.

THE TIME APPOINTED

“That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up . . .”

Other versions read, “horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music,” NKJV “the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music,” NASB and “the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, drum, and entire musical ensemble.” NRSV

Cornet. This was a trumpet, or horn – often that of an animal.

Flute. A wind instrument, often consisting of multiple pipes with holes.

Harp. A stringed instrument on which both notes and chords could be sounded by plucking the strings.

Sackbut. A triangular instrument with four or more strings, and described as having a shrill tone.

Psaltery. This was similar to a twelve-stringed guitar, with six different tones.

Dulcimer. Some feel this is a stringed instrument, and considered to be a precursor of the harpsichord, often held in a horizontal position. Some versions also refer to this as a wind instrument – the “bagpipe” (NASB, RSV), and even a “drum” (NRSV).

The commandment required the simultaneous falling down and worshipping of everyone standing before the image. There, in the sprawling plain of Dura, there could not be a single dissenting soul. In order to assure perfect accord, an orchestra of all manner of musical instruments would strike a chord, or begin some anthem. As soon as the sound was heard, the people were to prostrate themselves and worship “the golden image.”

Also Used in Praise to God

Although these instruments were used in an unlawful way in our text, most of them were also to be employed in the praise of God. Cornet (1 Chron 15:28; Psa 98:6), harp (Psa 33:2; 150:3), and psaltery (Psa 57:8; 144:9). The flute is mentioned in the NASB version, which is called a “Nehiloth” in the KJV. The fifth Psalm was written “for the flute accompaniment ” (Psa 5:1). The “sackbut” is referred to in other translations as the “lyre.” NKJV, NASB David wrote the sixth Psalm to be played upon “an eight stringed lyre” NKJV (Psa 6:1).

Under the leadership of David, certain musical instruments were dedicated to the service of God. They were called “the musical instruments of God” (1 Chron 16:42), or “instruments for the songs of God.” NASB

A Satanic Tactic

The point to be seen here is that Satan makes every effort to move men to use every means to serve what is false. Here, the sound of instrumental music, a thing most sacred to the Jewish mind, was used to initiate the worship of a golden image. The music itself was not the point, but what it was designed to provoke in men.

We should not be surprised that the devil still uses this same tactic. There are all manner of wicked ways and thoughts that are summoned into prominence by the sound of music. Just as surely as Nebuchadnezzar’s orchestra was designed to initiate profane homage and worship, so there are still certain manners of music that are designed to vault the flesh into prominence, moving people to give honor to Satan’s own devices.

THE PENALTY FOR DISOBEDIENCE DECLARED

“And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” The king left no question about the seriousness of the occasion. The strictest conformity was required, with no provision made for any variance of opinion. Anyone and everyone who failed to conform to this requirement would be thrown into a gigantic oven – and there would be no hope of survival. Thus the king will force his subjects to do his will by holding a dreadful way of dying before them.

A Principle to Be Seen

There is a principle to be seen here. It was abused by the king, yet there is profit to be realized if we can see it correctly. Mediocrity tends to reign where there are no requirements. When men are left to themselves, with no sure direction, they tend toward half-heartedness. Nebuchadnezzar sought to address this tendency by coercion – the threat of death. It is as though he sensed men’s reluctance to do what he commanded them to do.

Prior to the fall of man, there is no record of incentives being held before him. We do not know the extent of God’s communication with Adam and Eve before they sinned. The record of what was said to them is worthy of note.

- "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Gen 1:28)
- "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so." (Gen 1:29-30)
- "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Gen 2:16-17)

You will note that no appeal was made to do what was right. No blessing was promised for doing what was proper. A judgment was held forth for doing what was wrong.

Following the fall, however, the situation changed. Now God appealed to men to do what was right. He offered incentives to move them to obey His commands, which under Moses were mostly

prohibitive. A few samples will serve to illustrate this point.

- "But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries." (Exo 23:22)
- "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God." (Deu 28:1-2)
- "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it." (Deu 30:16)

Sin has so corrupted human nature, that incentives must be held before men to move them to do what is right, or compel them to do what is wrong. Under Christ, these incentives take the form of "exceeding great and precious promises," by which we become "partakers of the Divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4).

A DIFFERENCE IN NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Here we ought to note the difference between Nebuchadnezzar and the God of heaven. God also imposed penalties upon those who refused to do what He said. There was, however, a very distinct difference in the approach. Even under the Law, where men died "without mercy" (Heb 10:26), it was because they insisted on doing what was wrong. Men were not slain because they did not bow the knee to God, but because they did bow, and serve other gods. Note the nature of the ten commandments, and how sharply it conflicts with Nebuchadnezzar's order.

There is only one positive commandment: "Honor thy father and mother." The remainder are prohibitive, declaring what men were NOT to do: "no other gods," "not make unto thee," "not take the name," "not do any work," "not kill," "not commit adultery," "not steal," "not bear false witness," "not covet." The thrust of the Law was to prohibit sin – to restrain men from doing what was wrong.

In the case of Nebuchadnezzar, the penalty was for failing to do the very thing God had forbidden men to do. In his command, the king was binding his own will upon men, seeking to turn them to another god. That is why this test is of such critical importance – particularly to the Jews who have been brought into the land, and are in places of prominence.

Now we will see if the terror of the king will outweigh the fear of the Lord. We will see if faith is equal to such a test. Will these young men be able to stand?

COMPLIANCE WITH THE DECREE

“ 7 Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.”

The scene must have been quite impressive. As the orchestra began to play, this mass of people “fell down and worshiped the golden image that king Nebuchadnezzar had set up.” They are described as “all the peoples, nations and men of every language.” NIV Instantly they obeyed the word of the king. They knew a refusal to bow before this image would be taken as an act of antagonism against the king. Those who did not bow would instantly be regarded as enemies, and would be so treated.

Thus, whatever religious persuasions that were held by these people allowed them to instantly acquiesce to the commandment of the king. Perhaps they thought they could secretly worship their own god, while they bowed and worshiped this golden image. After all, Babylon did allow for many gods. The king had not commanded that all nations abandon their own gods – only that they bow before his golden image. It is clear from the response of this multitude that they felt they could do this. For them, it was better to bow than to burn.

INFERIOR RELIGION

The fact that this mass of people instantly bowed and worshiped the golden image confirms the inferiority of their religion. Any religion, regardless of its identity, that allows a person to bow and worship anyone or anything other than the God of heaven is unworthy of embrace. To put it another way, a religion that cannot keep a person in the midst of testing should be abandoned with zeal. Such a religion is not true, and has nothing to do with the God of heaven. A faith that does not keep is spurious and pretentious.

I fear this whole circumstance is closer to some of our contemporary conditions than some would care to believe. Nebuchadnezzar was not the last person who set up a test of allegiance that required doing something God forbids. In our own time, we have a word from the Lord: “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17), and “praying always with all prayer and supplication” (Eph 6:17). Our own government has sought to countermand that word by saying, “Do not pray in the schools,” “Do not pray in public places,” etc. Some have bowed to the decree, like the mass of people bowed to Nebuchadnezzar’s image.

A New Covenant Application

Wherever faith is compromised, a lie has been welcomed and embraced. Deception has effectively invaded the mind, and the truth, if it ever was believed, is thrust into the background. That is why a departure from the faith is viewed with such sobriety. Note how the Spirit accounts for people leaving good and godly persuasions. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (1 Tim 4:1).

This text will profit us if we can make a correlation between it and the times in which we are living. It is written for our admonition, and there are benefits to be gained from it.

WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING?

God is at work in this text. Something more is happening than merely carrying out the edict of king Nebuchadnezzar. Of itself, his word is not important enough to justify inclusion in the Scripture. What is really happening is this. God is setting the stage for the demonstration of His great power and absolute supremacy. He will overturn the word of the king, and show that His support of those who trust in Him is vastly superior to a Babylonian monarch. He will confirm that those who trust in Him will never be ashamed. He will never leave or forsake those who rely on Him. This event has been tailored to strengthen saints in succeeding ages.

THE ACCUSATION AGAINST THE THREE

“ 8 Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews. 9 They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. 10 Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12 There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

Here is the purpose for this whole account. Nebuchadnezzar has fastened the attention of the people upon the image. God will now call his attention to three young men. They are of more value than his ninety foot golden image. What is more, this pompous occasion will cause them to stand out from all others. When all of the men of distinction were called in, these three men did not stand out. As they all stood before the golden image, they did not appear prominent or distinctive. However, when the music sounded, and the people were to bow before the image, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego became very apparent. Their distinctiveness was instantly known by what they would not do.

GOD'S PEOPLE ACCUSED

“Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.” Other versions read, “For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews,” NASB and “At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews.” NIV We will see from the following verses that the Jews in general were not accused, but three of them in particular.

These Chaldeans had their eyes on the Jews they would accuse. Amidst this mass of people, it is difficult to conceive of them as being able to detect these particular Jews if they had not been looking for them. Prior to this, they would not have thought of accusing them before the king, for they had been put into their position by a sovereign edict. However, this occasion proved to be ideal for them to reveal their hatred of them. Thus they quickly and intentionally noted their response to the music.

It is when the righteous and unrighteous are mingled that the uniqueness of the righteous stands out. This is particularly true at an occasion such as this, when allegiance to a worldly ruler is being confirmed.

Some have suggested that Nebuchadnezzar was provoked to erect this idol in order that an accusation might be raised against the Jews. The reasoning is that their enemies knew they would not bow, and so arranged for this whole affair to take place so the Jews might be exposed. However, our text does not suggest this. Later, we will find such a tactic taking place (6:5-7), but there is no evidence that is what occurred here.

As I have already said, it is my persuasion that this was orchestrated by God Himself . On this occasion, the king himself did not realize what was really taking place.

A TECHNICAL POINT

“Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11 And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

The recitation of this technical point was designed to cause the king to favor the accusers. It was a way of feigning allegiance to the king, whose previous judgment they would shortly question. These were words of flattery, designed to help them realize their own desires. Note how they precede their accusation, as though they had more interest in the king's name than those whom they would accuse: “O king, live forever.” Also, they were not sloppy in their wording, but precisely related the decree word for word. Thus they would present the Jews as rebelling against the solemn and clear decree of the king.

CERTAIN JEWS

“There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

There is hatred in these words. How these men must have despised the three they now accused. Even though they were captive Jews, they had been exalted over all the affairs of Babylon, and it did not set well with these men.

Three Charges Leveled

They have not regarded the king. Other versions read, “have not paid due regard to you,” NKJV “have disregarded you,” NASB “who pay no attention to you,” NIV “have ignored your command,” NJB and “have defied your majesty.” NLT Thus, even though these were subjects of the king, and had been put into their place by his word, the three Jews are represented as despising, ignoring, and paying no attention to the word of the king.

They serve not thy gods. Other versions read, “they serve not thy gods,” ASV “they worship not thy gods,” DOUAY and “refusing to serve your gods.” NLT Even these men knew that no god is served before whom men do not bow and do homage. They knew a god cannot be served that is not honored, or whose word is ignored.

They do not worship the image. This was the only word that actually applied to the king’s decree. The king demanded that as soon as the music was heard, everyone was to fall down before the image and worship it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not do that. They chose to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

AN APPLICATION

It has been a favorite tactic of the enemies of God’s people to charge them with political insurrection and disobedience. Following the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, “the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin” heard it and raised an accusation against them. After opposing the work, they finally wrote to king Artaxerxes, accusing the Jews of insubordination. “Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings” (Ezra 4:13).

The same sort of accusation was raised against the Lord Jesus Himself. The Jews said to Pilate, “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ a King” (Luke 23:2). When it became evident Pilate wanted to release Jesus, the Jews

pressed this matter with him. “But the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh Himself a king speaketh against Caesar” (John 19:12).

Early in the history of the church, its opponents also charged it was unpatriotic, not yielding to the king. In “And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus” (Acts 17:7). Paul responded to such accusations, denying they were true. “While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all” (Acts 25:8).

Such charges were a gross misrepresentation in these cases, as well as that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They represent Satan's effort to bring discredit upon those who trust in God. Those who serve God are the best citizens, honoring the king (1 Pet 2:17), giving honor to whom honor is due (Rom 13:7), paying taxes (or giving tribute (Rom 13:7), and rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's (Matt 22:21).

What Nebuchadnezzar had required was not political in nature, but spiritual. Bowing down and worshiping a man-made image involves the repudiation of the God of heaven. In this, he had extended his authority beyond the border of Divine allotment. The response of the three Jews was not an act of disregard for the king, but of a higher regard for the Lord of the king. This will become clear in their response to Nebuchadnezzar.

THE BLASPHEMOUS FURY OF THE KING

“ 13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15 Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?”

The enemies had so framed their speech as to provoke anger in the king. Even though his exposure to the three young Jews had yielded only good, yet all of this is forgotten as he flies into a rage. When the flesh is offended, it cannot recall anything good, but only thinks of self. Those who are tempted to compromise with the flesh need to learn from this text. It will not turn to your good to yield to those who are offended by your faith. They will only turn and tear you like wild animals, as Jesus

said (Matt 7:6). There are surely important things to be learned from this incident.

FURY ISSUES A COMMAND

“Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” Other versions say he called for the three young men “in rage and anger,” NASB “furious with rage,” NIV “furious rage,” NRSV “shaking with fury,” NJB and “in wrath and passion.” BBE

Still other versions read, “Then Nebuchadnezzar flew into a rage.” NAB,NLT

This is the kind of state the king was in when he ordered the destruction of all the wise men in Babylon (Dan 2:12). From an earthly point of view, things could not possibly be any worse. This was the ruler of the world, whose word was implemented at his command. His summons did not pass through other political chambers, as a Senate or House of Representatives. To further complicate things, he had received his power from Almighty God. Earlier Daniel told him, “You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory ; in your hands He has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, He has made you ruler over them all . You are that head of gold” (Dan 2:37-38).

In this matter, however, the king is crossing over into a domain that does not belong to him. He is going to exact something beyond his authority to demand.

How will the three Jews respond to this summons? Will they run and hide? Is this a time when they must flee, as Jesus instructed the Jews to do when they saw Jerusalem surrounded (Matt 24:16)? Will their Jewish brethren assist them to escape the wrath of the king like Paul’s brethren assisted him when they let him down a wall in a basket (Acts 9:25)? Or will they simply leave Babylon like Moses forsook Egypt (Heb 11:27)?

We will see from this account that our response to trouble and danger is not stereotyped. The Lord has not provided us a handy manual of conduct that outlines exactly what we are to do when faced with danger and threats. Like the Hebrew children, we will have to live close enough to the Lord to know how to respond to peril and risk. In this case, running is out of order. This is a test in which standing by faith is the only thing to do. In order to please the Lord, there is no other alternative.

IS IT TRUE?

“ Is it true , O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods , nor worship the golden image which I have set up?” It is as though the king cannot believe what he has heard. It is apparent he is not accustomed to his word being disobeyed. This may also be perceived as an opportunity for the young men to deny the charge, saying they are quite willing to do anything the king demands.

My Gods

It seems to me that the Lord Himself is pushing the king's words out of his mouth. The real issue is clearly stated, and it will allow for the predetermined exaltation of the God of heaven.

Being polytheistic, or believing in many gods, Nebuchadnezzar was quite willing to allow the Hebrews to have their own God. He does not ask Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to curse their God, renounce Him, or swear they will not worship Him. He was not willing, however, for them to ignore his "gods." He demanded that they ALSO bow down before his gods, and worship them.

In this we behold another tactic of the devil. Satan has no difficulty with a profession of faith, or the claim to worship and honor God. When he tempted the Lord Jesus, he did not ask him to renounce the God of heaven, or to withhold worship from Him. He only asked that Jesus "fall down and worship" him (Matt 4:9).

Much of the religious corruption that is prevalent in our day is nothing more than yielding to this crafty approach of our adversary the devil. Myriad of people are bowing down to and serving the flesh in its varied and corrupt forms, all the while maintaining they are also servants of God, and worship Him. They go to church regularly, give of their means to religious causes, and sing and pray at the appointed times. But they are also bowing down in the plain of Dura, giving homage to idols men have raised up. Those idols may take the form of money, music, pleasure, or some other worldly corruption. However, yielding to them is exactly the same thing as bowing down before the golden image of Nebuchadnezzar and worshiping.

Of course, the truth of the matter is that we cannot serve two masters. It simply is not possible. Those who attempt to do so have been deceived. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat 6:24).

The Golden Image Which I Have Set Up

The king does not ask that the young men acknowledge the architectural excellence of the statue in the plain of Dura. He does not request that they simply look at it, or be present at its dedication. He demands that they worship the image – bowing down before it. Now, he gives them an opportunity to change their minds by asking if it is really true that they have refused to do this simple deed.

THE THREAT REAFFIRMED

"Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made;

well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace . . .”

The king is willing to go through the entire procedure again. The orchestra will strike up yet another time, and full opportunity will be granted to correct behavior that is not acceptable to the king. If the young men will simply do what the king has commanded, all will be forgotten, and the charges will have no weight before him at all. “Now if you are ready . . . to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well.” The appointed penalty is again stated, the king hoping it will strike enough fear into their hearts to obey his word.

THE EVIL CHALLENGE

“ . . . and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” The king’s demand was bad enough as it was. Now he greatly compounds his transgression by adding something to his edict. This was not included in his original decree. It is a bold and brazen challenge that will at once draw attention to the seriousness of this matter. It will also serve to awaken the three Jews to an even stronger faith: “and what God is there who can deliver you out of my hands?” NASB

This very challenge has been hurled in the face of others who put their trust in God. They are defiance against God, which He takes quite seriously.

- Pharaoh said to Moses, “ Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go” (Exo 5:2).
- Sennacherib, the king of Assyria boasted to Hezekiah, “Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand ?” (2 Kgs 18:35).
- When Jesus was crucified, the people chided, “He trusted in God; let Him deliver him now, if He will have Him : for He said, I am the Son of God” (Mat 27:43).

At this point, the issue is no longer with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Now it is with God, and He will come to the aid of those who trust in Him. Thus the real battle is set in array – the God of heaven against king Nebuchadnezzar, and ultimately against the gods of Nebuchadnezzar. God will not ignore this bold challenge.

THE RESPONSE OF FAITH

“ 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”

How will these young men respond to such a frightening threat of instant and dreadful death? Will their faith be able to sustain them? Will it cause them to be bold for forward in their reply? Will they have a peace that will keep them from stammering or crying? Remember, they are living in spiritually primitive times when the “exceeding great and precious promises” of God had not yet been unfolded (2 Pet 1:4). They did not have the indwelling Spirit in the sense those in Christ possess it (1 John 4:13). Nor, indeed, had they experienced Christ in them, the hope of glory (Col 1:27). For them, the star of hope was not shining as brightly as it does now that we have “a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet 1:19).

Yet, in them the power of faith will be seen – a power that is multiplied exceedingly in Christ Jesus. We do well to listen intently to their response, taking it into our hearts, and mulling it over in our spirits. Like David ran to meet Goliath, these three eagerly leap into the fray, not hesitating for a moment to respond to the king. This is nothing less than a display of the boldness of faith.

THE BOLDNESS OF FAITH

“O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.” Other versions read, “we have not need to answer you in this matter,” NKJV “we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter,” NIV and “we have no need to present a defense before you in this matter,” NRSV “your question needs no answer from us.” NJB

The words “we are not careful” mean, “there is no need for us to even give thought to this matter, for we are under no obligation to explain our refusal. What we are being asked to do is unlawful, and that is the end of the matter.” The fundamental thing here was to DO the will of God, not provide elaborate explanations for why it was being done.

The answer of the three young men is instant. They do not hesitate for a moment. They have been living by faith, and now they can answer by faith as well. They will speak in a calm and respectful manner, but they will not yield one minuscule point in this matter. There is nothing vague about what they face, and there is nothing vague about their answer. They will speak straight to the point, leaving no doubt about where they stand.

The idea here is that they will not negotiate with the king. This matter is not open for discussion.

They have made up their mind, and, with the Psalmist, their heart is “fixed” (Psa 57:7; 108:1). The straightforward demeanor of these three men is depicted in the 112 th Psalm. “Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD. (Psa 112:6-7). That is precisely what is taking place in this text. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not have to deliberate about this crisis. They did not have to pray about it, speak among themselves, or frame an eloquent answer for the king. Their minds were made up, and even the threat of an awful death could not turn them. For them, this was not a court of appeals, but a platform for witnessing to their unwavering faith in God.

These three faithful men refused to give any thought as to how they might avoid the curse of the king and the flame of the fiery furnace. They knew in their hearts that bowing to that golden image would dishonor their God, and therefore they would not do it.

An Application

Because these things are “written for our learning” (Rom 15:4), there is much to be gained from a sober consideration of this text. These men were living in a time of far less spiritual illumination than that of our day. The Sun of righteousness has now risen with “healing in His wings” (Mal 4:2). In the bright rays of His gracious light, we ought to have no difficulty being as firm in our resolution to honor God as these men. Yet, it is most apparent that our generation is not characterized by people who have made up their minds NOT to do what is wrong. There is altogether too much negotiation with the enemy, and compromise is the result. A brand of Christianity is being hawked in the religious world that allows both young and old to live close to the edge – so close it is difficult to detect whether people are worldly or godly. People are walking in the shadow of the forbidden. They mingle with multitudes that bow down to the golden images of this world.

I suggest this is because they have never reached the point where a determination was made NOT to dishonor God. They have never resolutely said with David, “I will have nothing to do with evil” NIV (Psa 101:4), or “I will not forget Thy Word” (Psa 119:16). Although Job lived before the Law, his resolve represents a commitment to God that is virtually unknown in the Western world: “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl” (Job 31:1).

This is why departures from the Lord are common in the professing church. It is why leaders fall into sin, infidelity intrudes into the church, and all manner of sin erupts among those professing faith in Christ. It is not because such people are caught unawares, it is because they live unawares. It is because they have not committed themselves to the Lord. It is because they have not lived by faith, and thus they were not kept by the power of God, which keeping is “through faith” (1 Pet 1:5).

OUR GOD IS ABLE

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace . . .” The three young men leave no question about whom they serve. They do not explain their action, but confess their Lord. They do not talk about what the king is purportedly able to do, but what their God can do.

“If It Be So”

These words mean, “if we are thrown into the blazing furnace.” NIV The New Revised Standard Version provides us with a blasphemous translation of this verse. “If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us.” This translation reads as though the question was whether or not God could deliver them. Rather than spouting unbelief, these men were confessing their faith in God. If it really did come to them being cast into the furnace, they knew God was able to deliver them.

Our God Is Able

Immediately, they confess this is their God – the One they worship and serve: “whom we serve.” In doing this, they were also confessing they did not serve Nebuchadnezzar’s gods.

With Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the question was never about what God could do – there was no question about that. They were not speculating about what God would do, but believing what He was able to do – and there is a big difference between the two. They did not devote themselves to contemplating what the outcome of their decision was going to be. Rather, they focused on the decision itself, knowing full well they served a God who was able to deliver them.

Nebuchadnezzar had asked the question, “who is that God who shall deliver you out of my hands?” Now the three young man respond, “our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.” With them, the issue was whether the king could throw them into the furnace, not whether God could deliver them from it. They were saying the same thing Jesus said to Pilate, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19:11).

AND HE WILL

“ . . . and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.” This is a statement of faith. It is much like the reasoning of Abraham when he was required to offer up Isaac: “Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb 11:19). These young men knew their God had power even over death, and could raise them from the dead, should He choose to do so. He could deliver them from going into the furnace, or raise them up from the effects of the furnace. At the best or at the worst, their God was over all. They were putting themselves into the hands of their God – not Nebuchadnezzar – and they trusted He would honor their faith. They were, in fact, saying what David did when asked to make a choice, “let us fall now into the hand of the LORD; for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man” (2 Sam 24:14).

I do not understand their statement to mean they were persuaded God would stop them from going into the furnace. Rather, by being delivered out of Nebuchadnezzar’s hand, they knew God’s will would override the will of the king. They were thinking in the same manner as the Apostle Paul when he faced danger. “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the

mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work , and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Tim 4:17-18).

BUT IF NOT

“But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Here the faith of these young men rises to glorious prominence. They are not thinking of themselves, but of the glory of their God. Faith is not driven by considering what God can do for us. Trusting in God is not contingent upon whether or not He delivers us. He is not governing the world with our agenda in mind, but in view of His own “eternal purpose.”

With great care, we must avoid any approach to life that does not consider “But if not . . .” The fact that God is able to deliver us out of the hands of men does not necessarily mean that He will. Abel was slain by his own brother (Gen 4:3-8). John the Baptist may be beheaded by Herod (Mark 6:18-28). Stephen may be stoned by the Jewish council (Acts 7:58-60). James may be slain by Herod (Acts 12:2). Antipas may die for Jesus (Rev 2:13). Even at this very moment, “the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held,” are “under the altar ,” awaiting the vindication of their blood (Rev 6:9-12). There have been, and will continue to be, cases when the saints are not delivered in the ordinary sense of the word.

What will these young men do if the Lord chooses NOT to deliver them? What if they know they will be thrown into the fiery furnace? Will that alter their determination not to bow before the king’s golden image?

We Will Not!

The faithful trio leaves no question about this matter. Whatever the outcome, whether publically supported by God or not, they want the king to know this. “O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” NASB They will serve the Lord, whether He delivers them or not! They resigned themselves to the will of the Lord, at that point, not knowing what it was.

They were ready to live for the Lord or die for the Lord. Further, they would rather die than sin. Not only was this in their hearts, they insisted that the king know it was well. Their faith and determination were a precursor to that of Paul, who said, “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death . For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:20-21).

Once they had determined to do the will of God, they gave no thought to the consequences of that decision. They knew the truth of what God told Eli, “them that honor Me, I will honor” (1 Sam 2:30).

Application

Our day sorely needs people with the conviction and confidence of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The amount of compromise that is found in the Christian community is staggering. It is found in fashions, leadership, music, and preaching and teaching. It is not unusual to find a preacher changing the manner and content of his preaching to please those who are at variance with God. Many young people, instead of being an “example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity,” as they are admonished (1 Tim 4:12), have chosen to emulate the world. Christian educational institutions have chosen to pattern themselves after the worldly schools, adopting their standards and manners. The virus of carnality has invaded the Western church, and we have a plague of carnal-mindedness as a result.

I do understand this may seem very negative, and cannot be received by some. However, we must have the courage to compare such conduct with that of the three Hebrew children. Keeping their positions, and even their lives, depended upon caving in to the demands of the king. Yet, they refused to dishonor God by honoring men. Those in Christ Jesus must be able to make a correlation between the challenges they face and those of our text. Nebuchadnezzar offered these young men their lives if they would bow before his golden image. Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world, and their glory, if He would fall down and worship him (Matt 4:8-9). Balak offered Balaam “rewards of divination” to curse Israel (Num 22:5-7).

What has been offered to you? Perhaps it is wealth, pleasure, being well liked, or being accepted by the institution. Sometimes the temptation takes the form of a career, or an influential position. Maybe someone has promised to be your friend if you will only compromise your faith, or go where they go, and do what they do.

You must settle it in your heart and mind to do what is right, whatever the cost. God is fully able to deliver you, just as He was able to deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But whether He does not, you must not bow to the demands of those who do not serve the Lord. You must make that determination now, before you are faced with the test. You must choose now whom you will serve.

The Gospel boldly announces you have every reason to serve the Lord, and that it is not vain to serve Him. He will not forget those who remember Him.

THE FURY OF THE KING INCREASES

“ 19 Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.”

We will now see the reaction of the flesh – flesh that has already been exposed to the works and word of God. Nebuchadnezzar has beheld the working of God in giving unusual wisdom and expertise to Daniel and his three companions (1:20). He has witnessed the revealing power of God when Daniel received the knowledge of his dream, together with its interpretation (2:26-45). He has heard first hand of the demise of his own kingdom, and the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God (2:45-46). The king has prostrated himself before Daniel, offered oblations to him, worshiped him, and confessed God to be the “God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a Revealer of secrets” (2:26-48). Now, after hearing of this same God from the mouths of these three young men, will the king recall a single word that he has heard concerning God? Will he be able to associate his own confession with the inferiority of his gods? Will he now view the God of heaven as his own Lord, as he previously had acknowledged?

FLESH WILL NOT BOW TO GOD

“Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego . . .” Instead of recalling his previous encounter with Daniel, or associating the image he set up with that in his dream, the king was “filled with wrath.” NASB Even his “facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” NASB Though he once highly regarded them, now “his attitude toward them changed.” NIV One version says, “his face became distorted with rage.” NLT Another reads, “Nebuchadnezzar's face became livid with utter rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” NAB Those whom he willingly promoted to be over the affairs of Babylon now became the target of his furious anger. In a moment of time he went from asking a simple question to being determined to kill the three who stood before him.

Because his heart was corrupt, Satan could freely work within him. He had heard the good word of God, and even acknowledged its truth. From his own mouth he had blurted out praise to God, admitting He was over all. Yet, he had learned nothing from it all. Flesh will not bow to God! When its own will is opposed by the Divine will, flesh will not yield. It is ever true, “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:8). They would rather burn God’s servants than bow to Him, or admit their gods are nothing. That is the nature of the flesh.

Flesh Cannot Learn Truth

No matter how frequently or abundantly truth is set before the flesh, it is not capable of grasping it. Just as Satan cannot learn, or profit from the working of the Lord, so those who are “in the flesh” cannot do so. You can subdue the flesh with laws and threats, but you cannot change it. You cannot alter its perspective, make it prefer the Lord, or provoke it to forfeit its own way. “The flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63), and in it “dwelleth no good thing” (Rom 7:18).

The very words that bring great edification to our spirits caused Nebuchadnezzar to become

exceedingly angry. When we read of the response of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we are encouraged to trust in the Lord. When the king heard them, he flew into a rage. That is the nature of the flesh. We do well to zealously avoid any compromise with a nature such as that. When your profession of faith and determination to serve the Lord causes anger in others, you are confronting the flesh. Do not yield to its suggestions.

SEVEN TIMES HOTTER

“ . . . therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.” The furnace had already been prepared, and was ready to receive those who refused to honor the king’s word. But that was not enough for Nebuchadnezzar. He now orders that the blazing furnace be heated “seven times more than it was usually heated,” NKJV or, “seven times hotter than usual.” NIV The meaning is, “seven times hotter than it had ever been before.” He no doubt gave no thought that, from his perspective, this would reduce the amount of suffering through which the victims would go. Rage does deprive men of all rationality.

WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING

We must not fail to see what is really happening here. God is actually setting the stage for His own glory. He is going to deliver His faithful ones, but will do so in such a way as will not allow His power to be questioned. What appears on the surface to be an impossible circumstance was nothing more than an occasion in which the Lord would receive unquestionable honor – even from a heathen monarch.

It is good when we can assess our own circumstances in this manner, not judging according to appearance, but judging righteous judgment (John 7:24). When everything seems hopelessly against us, let us reason in this manner. “Here is an opportunity for God to receive glory for Himself. Everyone can see that my case is hopeless, and that everything is against me. Perhaps this will turn out to be an opportunity for me to bring glory to God in a remarkable deliverance.”

Take heart, child of God, and do not yield to the pressures of threat and trouble. They are only small puffs of smoke amidst the strong gale of eternal purpose. They will soon disappear in the current of Divine will. God is still able to deliver you. The very contemplation of this will give you the strength to stand.

THROWN INTO THE FURNACE

“ 20 And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21 Then these men were bound in their

coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22 Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23 And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.”

There are a remarkable number of details provided in this account, and that for a reason. In them the Lord is removing all doubt as to the Source of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s deliverance. Possibilities are reduced so Divine power can be seen. Deliverance seems distant in order that Divine power might shine the more. It is like Elijah having twelve barrels of water poured upon his sacrifice before he prayed for God to consume it with fire (1 Kings 18:33-35). It is like Jesus asking that six water pots of 20-30 gallons each, be filled with water before He turned it into wine (John 2:6-8).

God is going to show that man can do nothing to reverse His decrees. Heat the furnace as hot as you will. Take whatever measures you consider will guarantee your desires will be fulfilled. The will of the Lord will still be done!

THE MOST MIGHTY MEN

“And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.” Even though the three young men offered no resistance, the king has “some of the strongest soldiers in his army tie up” the three. These were no doubt the strongest in both body and mind, noted for their obedience and bravery. Surely no known power could loose the bonds secured by these mighty men. Some have thought all three of the men were bound together in a bundle, then thrown like one great package into the fire.

Every possible disadvantage is now heaped upon the young men – as though being tied up in a furnace that was seven times hotter than it had ever been before, would make their death more certain.

The furnace is thought to have been circular, with both fuel and victims put into the top, and ashes removed from the bottom. Whether this is true or not makes little difference. What is occurring here is that three men are being cast into the equivalent of a modern blast furnace. They are totally bound, with, according to appearance, no possible way of escape.

BOUND IN THEIR CLOTHES

“Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments . . .” It is quite true that this condition may be the result of the hasty binding of the three men. However, we will learn from the outcome of this whole event, that their clothing proved to be a testimony to the power of God. It was the Lord Himself that saw to it their clothes remained on them. I do not doubt that men thought leaving the prisoners in their clothes would make their torment greater. Instead, it would make the working of the Lord more obvious.

The clothing included “hats” (turbans), “hosen” (underclothing), “coats” (robes, or outer garments), and “other garments” (coverings for the feet and head).

THROWN INTO THE MIDST

“ . . . and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” Thus the three were thrown into the center of the blazing furnace – the heart of the heat, so to speak. In this way the king thought to do his worst against the Lord’s best.

EXCEEDING HOT

“Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego . . . ”

Now the Spirit further sets the stage for the deliverance of Jehovah. Lest any imagine that someone could possibly survive this ordeal by natural means, we learn that the “the strongest soldiers” NIV of Nebuchadnezzar’s army were themselves killed by the very flames into which they threw the young Jews.

Their death is attributed to two things. First, “because the king’s command was urgent.” NASB Second, the furnace was “exceeding hot.” Some alternative translations put the matter in perspective for us. The idea is this: because the king had commanded the furnace to be heated seven times hotter, and because of the effects of this increase, the flames leaped out and destroyed the ones throwing them into the furnace. This is captured in several of the more free translations. “And because the king, in his anger, had demanded such a hot fire in the furnace, the flames leaped out and killed the soldiers as they threw the three men in!” NLT The Amplified Old Testament reads, “the flame and the sparks from the fire killed those men who handled Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.”

If, therefore, the fire was so intense that it killed those who were outside of the furnace, what would be the fate of those cast into the very center of it?

THEY FELL DOWN BOUND

“ . . . And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” There is, therefore, no question about who was thrown into the fire: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” There is no question about their condition: “fell down bound.” There is no doubt about where they fell: “into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ” They were utterly helpless, thus they “fell,” fully clothed, yet fully bound.

These men trusted God when they stood before the king. They relied upon Him when they were questioned. They trusted the Lord when they gave their answer. They maintained their faith when they heard the judgment. They kept on believing while they were bound. They depended on the Lord when

they fell into the furnace. There is now way the Lord will forsake those who believe so strongly.

There is no earthly power or wisdom that can deliver these men from this dilemma. All flesh in all ways is powerless in this matter. If God does not come to the aid of these men, no aid will come to them at all.

CONCLUSION

The event we have just reviewed is one of the better known ones of Scripture. Many people have known of it from their youth. It should not surprise us that it has also been the target of skeptics, who would have us believe such things could never really happen. But this is a real account, with real people, and a very real outcome. It speaks loudly to us of the power of faith, and the way in which God honors those who honor Him. It testifies to the ultimate futility of opposing the Lord, and the absolute wisdom of obeying God rather than men. It confirms that the world does, in fact, hate the people of God, and thinks nothing of consigning them to the worst of all circumstances if they refuse to do their bidding.

In this account the depravity of the flesh is confirmed. It will not learn from God, even though it is given every possible advantage. Extensive explanations can be given to the flesh, and it will not recall them when put to the test. It can behold great wisdom, see the excellence of Divine counsel, and forthwith forget it without any hesitation.

It prefers the honor of men to the honor of God, and the works of men to the works of God. It seeks the praise of men, not of God, and craves for honor that comes from peers and cannot last. Flesh thinks nothing of viciously opposing the very people it has exalted. It has no compunctions about painting the godly as foolish, and aligning itself against them. That is the nature of flesh. It can kill righteous Abel, mock Isaac the child of promise, and at last crucify the Lord of glory. It can hear God speak and think it thundered, see a blind man healed and say a sinner did it, and betray the Son of God for thirty paltry pieces of silver.

Flesh cannot learn the things of God, even though it is exposed frequently and extensively to the Lord and His ways. The natural man always considers the things of God to be “foolishness” (1 Cor 1:18-23). Flesh can say the right thing, but it cannot maintain a right perspective. Eventually, it will always act in contradiction of the truth, never agreeing with truth or willing to tolerate it.

All of this accents the folly of compromising with the flesh, or accommodating ourselves to it. They that are in the flesh cannot please God, whether they are a heathen like Nebuchadnezzar, or a prophet who prophesies for wages, like Balaam. Whether it is in Cain slaying Abel, or Peter denying he knew Jesus, the flesh always leads in the wrong direction. It is ever true, in the flesh, “dwells no good thing.”

On the other hand, faith makes the individual equal to any occasion, whether it is being promoted to a high position, or consigned to a furnace of fire. Faith can stand while the persecutors are being burned in the flame they intended for the saints. It can survive assault, come back from seeming defeat, and hold still while men bind the believer in vain. Living by faith is always the right thing to do, and never puts the one possessing it at a disadvantage. It always puts the trusting one at the helm, guaranteeing triumph at last. It is “the victory that overcomes the world” (1 John 5:4).

One other thing can be observed from this incident. Those who expect to stand in trial must build up their faith before hand, determining in their hearts not to sin against the Lord. Solemnly we are admonished, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life” (Jude 1:20-21). Weak and emaciated souls will not stand in the hour of trial. Such a time is not an occasion to get faith, but one in which faith is to be used – faith that has already been obtained, kept, and nurtured.

If a person does not commit himself to the Lord, resolving to do what is right and honor the Lord, they will not be able to stand in “the hour of temptation” (Rev 3:10), or “the evil day” (Eph 6:13). Once the fiery trial comes, it is too late to make your good resolves. Better to make them during the quiet times, when you are feeding your soul, pressing in to the bosom of the Lord, and seeking to obtain the prize. God will invariable side with those who have faithfully maintained fellowship with Him.

Those who neglect their souls, not building up themselves on their most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:20), are sure to fall. When a person neglects his faith, not fighting the good fight of faith, faith cannot sustain him in the hour of trial.

However, there is no need for such neglect to take place in you. God has given to you “all things pertaining to life and godliness.” These resources are given to us “through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet 1:3). Additionally, multiplied measures of “grace and peace” are given to us by the same means: “through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Pet 1:2).

That simply means that in the experience of fellowship with God, the things we require are ministered to us. Those things will keep us in all situations. That includes trials like the one Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego went through, as well as great honors, like that bestowed earlier upon Daniel. As you walk with God, as did Enoch and Noah, you will always be prepared for the circumstances of life, and will be the victor in them.

The Prophecy of Daniel

DELIVERED FROM THE FURNACE and PROMOTED BY THE KING

Lesson #12

INTRODUCTION

In a fit of rage, Nebuchadnezzar has commanded the strongest men in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and throw them into a burning fiery furnace. At his command, the furnace was heated seven times hotter than it had ever been before. Apparently this was done while the three young men were being bound, causing the flames to leap forth, slaying the mighty men who threw the three into the fire. It is at once obvious that no one could withstand this furnace by natural means. With all hope according to the flesh destroyed, the three, who refused to bow before the image set up by the king, fell down in the middle of the fiery furnace, where the flames were the hottest.

IMPOSSIBLE THINGS WROUGHT

There is a fundamental lesson being taught in this account. It is something to be learned by all generations. It is food for faith and fuel for hope. It comes in the form of a two-sided coin. It moves us to consider the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace and shout, "But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matt 19:26). It must move us to say with the angelic messenger, "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37).

It is essential to see that throughout history, God has dried up human possibility before He illumined Divine ability. This is not a matter of learning theology, but of discerning the ways of God. Ponder these revealed human epochs in which all hope in man was reduced to ashes. It was then, and only then, that a Divine remedy was revealed.

- The recovery of man from the fall (Rom 5:12-19).
- The establishing a godly remnant in the days of Noah (Gen 6:8).
- Surviving a global flood (Heb 11:7).
- A vast nation coming from Abraham and Sarah (Rom 4:19).
- A conquering Savior coming through Abraham and Sarah (Heb 11:12).
- The Messianic Seed coming through Isaac, whose wife was barren (Gen 25:21).
- The Messianic Seed coming from Jacob, whose wife was barren (Gen 29:31).
- Young Joseph being placed on the throne in Egypt (Gen 45:9).
- A Savior coming through the nation of Israel (Isa 5:4; 9:6-7).
- The infant Moses surviving the edict of Pharaoh (Ex 2:3).
- Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Ex 13:3).
- Israel; walking through the Red Sea on dry land (Ex 14:29).
- Israel surviving the attacking Army of Pharaoh (Ex 14:8-9,23).
- Israel receiving daily sustenance in the wilderness (Ex 16:35).
- Israel obtaining water from a rock (Ex 17:6).
- The conquering of Jericho (Josh 6:3-20; Heb 11:30).
- A shepherd boy being vaulted to the great king of Israel (2 Sam 7:8).
- Israel surviving Sennacherib's attack (2 Kgs 19:35).
- Young David slaying Goliath of Gath (1 Sam 17:23-50).
- Israel conquering the Philistines in Samson's time (Judges 16).
- Israel defeating the Midianites in Gideon's time (Judges 7:1-7,24,25).
- Four Hebrew slaves becoming officials in the nation who took them captive (Dan 2-3).
- Zechariah and Elizabeth having the forerunner of Jesus (Luke 1:7-36).
- The Savior born of a virgin (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23).
- A Pharisee breathing our threats against the church becoming the Apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 7:38; 8:1-3; 9:1-30).

In which of these cases was any facet of human strength or ability prominent? Which of these things could man – any man – have accomplished. Is there a single one of them that could have been achieved by a group of men. What possible role could the statistician have played in their accomplishment? What worldly wise man could have contributed to their success – even one weightless mote? Could human logic have produced the smallest ray of hope? Was there any human strength, individual or collective, that could have achieved even one small aspect of these things?

A resounding “God forbid!” is shouted to every one of the foregoing questions. Fleshly hope was dried up BEFORE God went to work. Man had to see the futility of his own strength before he could see or appreciate “the mighty God” (Isa 9:6; Jer 32:18). In fact, no real need for God is perceived until the weakness of man is seen and acknowledged.

This is designed to confirm the reality of what is proclaimed in the New Covenant.

- Enemies are reconciled to God (Rom 5:10).
 - Those dead in trespasses and sins are quickened toward God (Eph 2:1).
 - Those who were alienated are reconciled (Col 1:21).
 - Those whose lives have been ruined are born again (1 Pet 1:23).
 - That the past of sordid sinners could be removed (1 Cor 6:9-11).
 - Those who were not a people could become the people of God (1 Pet 2:10a).
 - Those who had not obtained mercy would obtain mercy (1 Pet 2:10b).
 - Those upon whom the wrath of God abode would become the sons of God (John 3:35; 1 John 3:1-2).
 - The guilty would be justified (Acts 13:39).
 - Those having no hope would abound in hope (Eph 2:12; Rom 15:13).
 - Those who sat in darkness would see a great light (Matt 4:16).
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- Those who were “without God” would be indwelt by God (Eph 2:12; 2 Cor 6:16).

The Plague of Problem Definers

One of the plagues of our time is the smallness of the problems men acknowledge. The self-appointed problem definers and solvers do not uncover the real impediment, but deal only with frothy symptoms. There is no glaring need for the Living God, or the conquering Christ, or the empowering Spirit. The schools of men can give the problem solvers what they need. Some exposure to the books of human wisdom will suffice for them.

However, of what value would these pretenders be to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? What philosophy would have brought comfort to them? What book of statistics could have consoled their hearts? Were there any compilations of survivors of burning fiery furnaces? Were there any precedents in the history books of men who could have offered them hope? Of course, we know all of these questions are mere rhetoric. There is no substance to them at all. The Lord so orchestrated this matter so that every one would see there was no hope in human wisdom, strength, or riches. No one could talk these men out of the furnace! No one was strong enough to enter the furnace and rescue them from its destructive burning. There was no man rich enough to buy deliverance for the young men. If ever there was a time for Jeremiah’s words, it was now. “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jer 9:23-24).

If we fail to see this, the account before us will bring us no lasting profit. It is imperative that we see there are things that are “impossible” with men – things that cannot be accomplished with human wisdom, strength, or riches. There are challenges that exceed the ability of men. There are forces aligned against us that are stronger than we. It is only “He that is in us” that is “greater than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Those who oversimplify our problems put the resolution of them further from us. In the life of faith, when we are presented with solutions originating with men, the very need for the Lord is diminished, and we are brought to consider ourselves and our peers to be stronger and wiser than we really are.

We dare not assess our difficulties from a purely human point of view. First, to do so dishonors our Lord, who has purchased us, for we are “bought with a price” (1 Cor 6:20; 7:23). It is the entirety of our persons that has been “bought” – spirit, soul, and body. For those in Christ Jesus, every part will eventually be redeemed, even though at this present time we struggle with the fickleness of our souls (Psa 42:5), and the recalcitrance of our bodies (1 Cor 9:27). Until our bodies are raised from the dead – the redemption of the purchased possession” – we must learn to relate the whole of our lives to the Lord, calling Him into our difficulties and challenges.

Although they lived in a time when these things were not fully known, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had learned to associate their difficulties with their God, depending upon Him in the midst of all manner of trial. Faith will do no less for us. It is imperative that this be seen, acknowledged, and made a part of our conscious lives. It is one thing to say this, it is quite another to do it. It will not be long for any of us until we will see how much faith is required to live in this posture.

Challenges Tend to Increase

By Divine design, our challenges tend to increase. We have made significant progress in the faith when we are able to perceive this. We see it in Daniel and his three companions.

- First, they are challenged with being captured by a hostile king.
- Second, they are challenged by being ordered to conform to heathen standards.
- Third, they were subjected to the scrutiny of the king, who compared their appearance and abilities with others.
- Fourth, they were tested by the king’s mandate to slay all of the wise men.
- Fifth, they stood the test of whether they would seek the Lord in the hour of crisis.
- Sixth, they were challenged to compromise their faith by bowing down to an image made by the king.
- Seventh, their faith was challenged with the threat of a special death.
- Eighth, they were actually thrown into a fire so robust, it killed the men who threw them into it.

With each faithful response, the strength of these young men was increasing. Their faith grew as it was used, and their determination grew as it was governed by their faith. Due consideration of their

case will help us to respond honorable to circumstance.

It should not surprise us that these young men are delivered. God is honored by delivering those who put their trust in Him, refusing to waver or bend in the strong winds of trial. Those who vacillate in trial are only guaranteeing their fall. They will not be able to stand who compromise their convictions, or bow to the gods of this present evil world.

AN ASTONISHED KING

“ 3:24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.” Even though Nebuchadnezzar had consigned these men to a fiery furnace, it is obvious that he was curious about them. He seemed to sense these were no ordinary men. The boldness of their faith had no doubt provoked him to a sober reflection of his confrontation of them earlier – when they proved superior to all of his wise men. He must have also recalled his own readiness to promote them when Daniel had declared his dream and the interpretation of it. Their light had been shining, and the king had witnessed it first hand. Now there is something within that provokes him to peer into the furnace. Under ordinary circumstances, he would have had no such inclinations. After all, the flames that leaped out of the furnace killed the strongest men of his army who had thrown the three faithful servants of God into the fire. Surely such a judgment as this would not, under ordinary circumstances, have provoked the king to see if his word was effective. But these are no ordinary circumstances! God is in this matter, orchestrating the affairs for His own glory and our edification.

There are at least two things to learn from this verse.

First , those who walk by faith will “shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2:15). Due note will be taken of their manner of life, even though it may often appear this is not true. There will come a time when the enemies of the faithful will ponder their conduct – a time when they will recall the firmness of the faith and resolution of the saints of God. Peter said such an occasion would provoke the enemies to “be ashamed” (1 Pet 3:16). He also said some would, by the “good works” of the faithful, “glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12). This will be lived out in our text.

Second, the Lord will vindicate the faith of His people, even though He “bears long with them” (Luke 18:7). When the time is appropriate, and it will best serve His glory and our eternal interests, our God will deliver us. We must ever remember the truth of David’s confession: “My times are in Thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me” (Psa 31:15). Armed with that knowledge, there is no trial we cannot face, or furnace in which we cannot survive. Your faith must

take hold of this, refusing to doubt its truth.

ASTONISHMENT

“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake . . .” Other translations say the king was “astonished,” NKJV “astounded,” NASB and “leaped to his feet in amazement.” NIV The word used here is a significant one meaning to be startled or alarmed. Some linguists say the word carries the idea of being “swept to ruin.” It also includes the idea of being devastated and brought to ruin. STRONGS There is also the idea of trembling, as though the Lord was forcing the king to admit his own inferiority. That is, the king was alarmed that his edict had been reversed, and his decree dashed to the ground.

Other Renderings

The LXX (Septuagint, Hebrew Scriptures in Greek) has an interesting translation of this verse. “And it was when the king heard them singing praises, and stood and saw them living, then was Nebuchadnezzar the king astonished and rose up hastily . . .” Theodotion, another translator of the Old Testament after the Septuagint Version rendered this verse this way: “And Nebuchadnezzar heard them singing praises, and marveled, and rose up in haste.”

The mighty God of heaven had made Nebuchadnezzar’s word of none effect, and he was startled that it was so. The text also indicates there is an element of fear in being “astonished,” because one is confronting a power superior to his own. It moved the king to quickly get up and inquire about the events attending the condemnation of the three men. Until this time, he had thought himself invincible, but now he was beginning to see this was not at all the case.

Thus the Lord moves the king to make this spectacle public. Because it is a miracle of God, it must not be kept private. Nebuchadnezzar will now bring his counselors into the matter. From his viewpoint, he is seeking further verification. From heaven’s viewpoint, a public demonstration will be given of God’s superiority. These men refused to bow to the king’s golden image, which was nothing more than a vain idol. The refusal of the young men to bow to that idol was made public. Now, their deliverance will also be made public.

VERIFICATION

“ . . . and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.” The words of the king are not accompanied with the brashness exhibited when he had the three young men thrown into the fiery furnace. Now there is a tremor in his voice, as his wicked heart has been arrested by the God of heaven. At first, it is as though the king considers the possibility that more than the three had been cast into the furnace. But God will not allow such a foolish notion to continue. He will cause the truth of the matter to surface in order that the faith of His servants might be seen and acknowledged.

At this point, the king groups himself and his counselors together: “did not WE cast three men bound. . .” The verse suggests that the counselors were involved in this judgment. If they were not a part of its instigation, they certainly agreed with what the king was doing. They had added their “Amen” to the judgment against the three young Hebrews.

Again, we must see the working of the Lord in this whole matter. The king might have easily relied upon his own memory, and depended upon the strict carrying out of his edict, with no doubt that it had been done. In such a case, this whole matter would have remained relatively secret. However, God will not allow this to happen. The counselors will be forced to face the vanity of Babylonian religion and the impotence of its king in the face of Jehovah God.

This was not something that was eagerly done, nor was the king driven by his will. Rather, he was driven by fear, and circumstances for which no earthly account could be given. It is ever true, the Lord is “terrible to the kings of the earth” (Psa 76:12). In this very test, the 102 nd Psalm is being fulfilled: “So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory” (Psa 102:15).

The counselors quickly answer, “True, O king.” Other versions read, “Certainly, O king.” NASB/NIV There is no doubt about this! THREE men were cast into the furnace. Three men were CAST into the furnace. Three men were cast BOUND into the furnace. From every possible earthly point of view, there was no hope of survival. From every vantage point, the three young men had been conquered by a power superior to themselves. They had been bound by the strongest men in the military, and thrown into a furnace so hot it killed the men who threw them in. This was done because they refused to yield to a man, and instead insisted upon yielding to their God.

AND WHAT OF YOU??

And what of you? What circumstance is there in your life that appears to be hopeless? Is there something that men have acknowledged is beyond all hope? You must flee to the account of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednedgo! You are no less a child of God than them. In fact, if you are in Christ, you have even greater advantages than they did. Do your enemies seem greater than you? Have you been bound by the ropes of difficulty, and secured with the bonds of sorrow? Has one of your peers seemed to take dominion over you? Do not judge according to appearance (John 7:24). If you have taken your stand for the Lord, He is for you, and “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).

God can cause you to survive in this trial, and make your enemies acknowledge that He has done so! That is how much He thinks of you! Are you able to depend on that?

LOOSE AND WALKING WITH A FOURTH MAN

“ 25 He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Now the king publically declares what God has caused him to see. He will provide such details as will accrue to the glory of God. He will phrase his words in such a manner as to emphasize the power of God. He does not do this with a desire to glorify God. Rather, God causes him to speak in this manner, putting a word in his mouth, even though he is the king who is responsible for the young men being in the fire.

I SEE FOUR MEN

“ Lo , I see four men . . . ” Other versions read, “ Look , I see four men . . . ” The king calls for his counselors to look into the furnace for themselves. He had three men thrown into the fire to destroy them. Rather than destroying them, the number of men increased. Now there was four. The edict of the king had not only been overturned, it had been countermanded by an even greater decree that brought a fourth person into the flame. The enemy had not increased. Rather, the number of those associated with the God of heaven increased.

LOOSE

The men who were cast into the furnace bound were now loose. The fire that was intended to destroy them had been the place where their bonds were loosed. Concerning their bonds, there are at least three possibilities. First, they might have been bound with ropes, in which case, the fire burned them off. Second, they may have been bound with some non-combustible material, like chains, in which case the fire could have been intense enough to melt the chains. Third, the fire may have had nothing at all to do with their loosing, for it was purely a work of the Lord.

However one chooses to view it, the glory must go to the Lord, not to the fire. The point is that what was designed to kill them was the very experience in which the three children of Judah were liberated.

WALKING IN THE MIDST OF FIRE

“ . . . walking in the midst of the fire . . . ” Other versions read, “walking around in the fire,” NIB and “walking in the middle of the fire.” BBE The idea is that they were continually moving about in the very heart of the flame. The fire had not taken one bit of mobility from them. They went into the fire restricted, but now that they were in the fire, there was not the slightest restriction found in them. They were moving about with all of the liberty they would have had in their own house. One man has said “the furnace being large enough to walk in, and where they took their walks as in a garden, nor were they concerned to come out of it, nor uneasy at being in it.” JOHN GILL Indeed, this is no doubt the occasion to which Hebrews refers when it speaks of those who “quenched the violence of fire,” or “quenched the fury of the flames” NIV (Heb 11:34).

See how strong these young men are – they walk about in fire. Behold how confident they are, they stroll around in the flames. I do not doubt they sang the praises of God in their trial as Paul and Silas did in theirs (Acts 16:25). As I have already mentioned, the Septuagint Version says “ the king heard them singing praises.” and I do not doubt that it was so. I cannot conceive of these three godly men simply walking around with their hearts and minds disengaged. They were experiencing the deliverance of the Lord, and it is inconceivable that they would have kept silence. What holy pleasure and delight must have been found in them!

THEY HAVE NO HURT

“ . . . and they have no hurt . . . ” Other versions read “they are not hurt,” NKJV “without harm,” NASB “unbound and unharmed,” NIV “there has no harm happened to them,” Septuagint and “they are not damaged.” BBE The dreadful fire into which they had been thrown was utterly powerless against them. Their bodies were not harmed, nor were their turbans, coats, shoes, or other garments. They were not walking about on fire, but walked unharmed in the midst of the fire. They suffered no pain in their bodies, nor loss of their garments.

Thus Nebuchadnezzar was forced to acknowledge his decree had been reversed. There was One who was more powerful he, who could set aside the word of the king as though it was nothing. I understand that the Chaldeans worshiped fire (pyrolatry), and had many “Fire-Temples.” Some historians have said the patron God of Nebuchadnezzar was Nahu, “the god of fire,” although I cannot substantiate that to be the case. Fire gods mentioned in the prophets include Molech (Lev 18:21; 2 Kgs 23:10), Adrammelech and Anammelech (2 Kgs 17:31; 19:37; Isa 37:38), Chemosh (Judges 11:24; 1 Kgs 11:7; 23:13) and Dyonisus (Acts 17:24). However, the God of these servants, by protecting them in the fire, threw any purported “fire god” down to the ground in disgrace.

We must not allow Nebuchadnezzar to see more than we are able to see in Christ Jesus. If we can see the afflicted people of God aright, they are not being hurt by their afflictions – even though they are, so to speak, in a furnace of fire. The deliverances of God are real!

THE FOURTH MAN

“I see four men loose . . . and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Other versions read, “the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods,” NASB “the fourth looks like a son of the gods,” NIV “the fourth has the appearance of a god.” NRSV and “the fourth looks like a Divine being.” NLT

The fourth “man,” stood out to the king. Although, from one standpoint, he was like the other three, yet it was apparent that he was different from them.

There has been a great deal of speculation concerning this personage. Some have affirmed this

was Gabriel. Still others have insisted it was a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus, who many are wont to say is the “His angel” of Moses and the Prophets (Gen 24:7,40), as well as “the angel of the Lord” (Gen 16:7; 22:11; Ex 3:2; Num 22:22; Judges 2:1; 13:3; 1 Kgs 19:1, etc.). Before going any further, I want to establish this was not a preincarnate (when the Word became flesh) appearance of Jesus Christ.

This Was Not Jesus

This view is a fanciful bit of theology that multitudes have embraced, and that is wholly without a syllable of justification from Scripture. First, the words “His angel” and “the angel of the Lord” are not peculiar to the Old Covenant writings. If, however, this was a reference to the Lord Jesus, they would have been confined to the writings of Moses and the Prophets.

First, “His angel” is mentioned in the Apostolic writings. This is how the angel who delivered Peter from prison was identified (Acts 12:11). The angel who revealed the Revelation to John is also referred to as “His angel,” and was further sent to John by Jesus Himself (Rev 1:1). John again refers to this angel in Revelation 22:6, saying “the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servant . . .” No person of sound thought would affirm these were references to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is consistently depicted as presently enthroned at the right hand of God (Acts 5:31; 7:55; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 8:1; 12:2; 1 Pet 3:22).

Second, the phrase “the angel of the Lord” is also used in the New Covenant writings. This is who revealed to Joseph that Mary was carrying a child conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20,24). Joseph took the young child Jesus and His mother into Egypt at the direction of “the angel of the Lord” (Matt 2:13). Such an angel is said to have rolled the stone away from the tomb in which Jesus had been buried (Matt 28:2). Other references to “the angel of the Lord” are related to the deliverance of the Apostles (Acts 5:19), the direction of Philip to speak to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26), the deliverance of Peter from prison (Acts 12:7), and the slaying of Herod (Acts 12:23). It should require no further explanation to confirm this was not the Lord Jesus Christ, but a heavenly servant of the Savior. This is simply not how the Holy Spirit uses this term “His angel.”

In addition to these considerations, it is expressly stated that Savior “took not on Him the nature of angels” (Heb 2:16). This has particular regard to the redemption of humanity in whose likeness He came. Thus other versions read, “For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:16). The relevance to the matter we are discussing is apparent. The Word, as Jesus was referred to prior to becoming flesh (John 1:14), only took the form of those He came to help. If at any time He had taken the form of an angel, as some affirm, it could only have been to give assistance to angels, not men. That is something He is nowhere represented as doing. Additionally, to be made a messenger, which is the meaning of “angel,” the Word would be required to humble Himself, taking a lower position. To affirm that such a thing took place comes very close to blasphemy. The preincarnate Word is never depicted as in any way humbling Himself prior to becoming flesh in order to the salvation of men. There is not a syllable in Scripture that justifies such a conclusion.

Men should thrust from themselves foolish opinions that demean the Lord Jesus Christ, making

Him a servant for human deliverance before He was “made of a woman, made under the Law” (Gal 4:4). Although some notable men have taken the position I have here denied, it is still a false one, demeaning of the Lord Jesus, and serving not one bit of enlightenment concerning His Person.

This Was An Angel

The same “fourth person” is called an “His (God’s) angel” in verse 28. Thus, we see that God sent an angel from heaven to deliver his faithful servants. This time the deliverance was not from the fire, but in the fire.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

Angelic deliverance and protection

One of the chief, if not exclusive, ministries of holy angels is that of ministering to the heirs of salvation. As it is written, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb 1:14).

There are frequent reminders of this fact in the Scriptures.

- “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” (Psa 34:7)
- “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (Psa 91:12)
- " Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." (Mat 18:10)
- "And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." (2 Ki 6:17)

For those in Christ Jesus, angels are not always seen, but they are always there. There is no hardship through which the elect pass of which the holy angels are unaware. Behind every good day, when the enemy ceases to oppress, the activity of holy angels has been in the background, ensuring the ultimate safety of the children of God.

God is with us in trials

Satan would have us imagine that trouble, oppression, sorrow, and the likes, are evidences that

the Lord has abandoned us. Such a thought, however, is only a foolish imagination – a fiery dart hurled at us by the wicked one. “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa 41:10). In confirmation that this is a promise for us, “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” NKJV (Heb 13:5).

It is ever true, “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them” (Isa 41:17). As we are engaged in the good work of the Lord, working together with Him (1 Cor 3:9), we have this unwavering promise: “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Mat 28:20). That, dear child of God, is something your faith can grasp with confidence. The persuasion of this reality will keep you in the hour of trial.

Afflictions are part of the path in which we walk

Those who take their stand with the Lord, refusing to bow to the gods of this world, will suffer affliction. This is part of living by faith. As it is written, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim 3:12). In fact, being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ are contingent upon suffering with Jesus. As it is written, “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom 8:17).

We are reminded that we have been appointed to “afflictions” (1 Thess 3:3). If we suffer for righteousness sake, it is only by “the will of God.” As it is written, “For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing” (1 Pet 3:17). For this reason we are admonished, “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Pet 4:19).

These afflictions will never exceed our ability to bear them, but are faithfully accompanied with Divinely appointed means by which we can escape being overcome by them (1 Cor 10:13).

All deliverance is not after this manner

This marvelous account does not justify the conclusion that deliverance is always after this manner.

- Abel was killed by Cain (Gen 4:3-8).
- Some of the prophets of God were killed by wicked Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:13).

The prophet Zechariah was stoned in the very court of the house of the Lord (2 Chron 24:21-22; Matt

- 23:35).
- John the Baptist was beheaded (Mark 6:18-28).
- Stephen was stoned (Acts 7:58-60).
- James the Apostle was killed (Acts 12:2).
- The Jew killed their own prophets (1 Thess 2:13).
- During Old Covenant times, there were many miraculous deliverances. However, there were also others who were summoned by God to endure the harshest treatment. “Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb 11:38).

There is no guarantee we will be delivered from all oppression in the manner in which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered. Yet, we must store the knowledge of their deliverance in our memories, for it attests to power of God. The remembrance of their rescue will strengthen our faith and refurbish our hope.

Allow me to be even more specific in this matter. It is IN affliction that God makes us peculiarly His own. It is written, “Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction ” (Isa 48:10).

We must seek grace to be delivered from naive and overly-simplistic views of spiritual life. To entertain such erroneous views guarantees our fall in the time of trouble.

Ultimately, afflictions do not hurt the people of God

As grievous as afflictions are, they cannot ultimately hurt us. Has not the Lord promised, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee ” (Isa 43:2).

Accenting this truth, Jesus once told His disciples they would suffer many things, with some of them even being killed. Yet, no ultimate harm would come to them. Thus He said, “And ye shall be

betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish ” (Luke 21:16-18). Every trouble, difficulty, and affliction is strictly monitored by the Lord. If you will keep on believing, no real harm or detriment will come to you. You must exert yourself to believe this, and rely implicitly upon it.

A Man Will Be for A Hiding Place

All of this reminds me of one of God’s exceeding great and precious promises. Isaiah delivered the Word during very hard times. It is a word for us, and we do well to receive it with joy. As it is written, “And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind , and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of water in a dry place , as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land ” (Isa 32:2).

Make no mistake about this, child of God. There are winds of adversity that, were it not for the grace of God, would sweep us into oblivion. There are mighty spiritual tempests that would eternally disrupt us, were the Lord not for us. There are places so dry and bereft of spiritual nourishment that, were it not for the Lord, we would have died long ago. There is a land so weary that it exceeds our strength, and would soon cause us to fall if the Lord was not with us.

The “Man” of Isaiah’s prophesy is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is “the hiding place,” or refuge NASB the stormy wind cannot penetrate. He is the One God has appointed to be our “covert,” or shelter NASB from the roaring storm. He is the streams that break out in life’s desolate places, and the shade of a huge rock in a parched and thirsty land.

Walking in fellowship with Jesus, you will survive just as surely as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! Have faith in God! He is with you when you pass through taxing trials – yes, the most difficult of them!

COME FORTH

“ 26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.” The testimony of the king is not enough to bring sufficient glory to the Lord. The sight of them walking in the furnace is good, but not good enough. The delivered men of faith must stand before their condemners. The Babylonian counselors must see them close at hand, and be persuaded of the truth to which the king has already testified.

NEAR THE MOUTH, BUT NOT BURNED

“ . . . Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace . . . ” Other versions read, “came near the door of the furnace of blazing fire,” NASB and “approached the opening of the blazing furnace.” NIV One versions reads, “Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace.” NLT

Doubtless, the flames were not shooting out like they were when the men who threw the three into the furnace were killed. Yet, the furnace was still ablaze, for the angel and the three men were walking about “in the midst of the fire.” Even so, as the king came near to the mouth of the furnace he was not burned or put into danger. He got close enough to know the intensity of the heat was very real. He knew full well this was no natural oddity that he was confronting.

The flames could very well had leaped forth and killed the king. Yet, God was in this whole matter to bring glory to His name and comfort to His saints. He will also give a flawless display of His power to those who dared to worship other gods.

SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD

“ . . . and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God . . . ” You may expect the king did not speak in the same intonation he used when he demanded they bow before his image, or else be cast into a fiery furnace. His unbridled wrath had been mitigated by what he now confronted. Now Nebuchadnezzar has great respect for those he had formerly despised and condemned.

Even though he calls them by the names he had given to them (1:7), he does not refer to them as his servants. Rather, he calls them “servants of the most high God.” For three years they had been trained to be his counselors (1:3), and had been made the head over the affairs of Babylon (2:49; 3:12), which was his seat of authority. Yet, he does not call them his servants, but “servants of the most high God.” They chose to serve God even though it meant they would be consigned to death for doing so.

An Aspect of serving God

Here is one of the aspects of serving God. He cannot be served casually, thoughtlessly, or perfunctorily. That is, those who attempt to serve God half-heartedly, without the involvement of the hearts and minds, or mechanically or by rote, do not serve God at all. Faith simply will not work in such a way, and “without faith, it is impossible to please” Him (Heb 11:6). In spite of this circumstance the church is too often noted for such service. It is not acceptable.

It is written that we are to seek grace to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”

(Heb 12:28). Such service refuses to bow the knee to the gods of this world. Those who genuinely serve God are appropriately described as overcoming the devil “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death ” (Rev 12:11). The Psalmist spoke of God’s servants as those remaining consistent in the night. “Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD ” (Psa 134:1). In the night of trial, they serve their God. In the darkness of affliction, they serve Him. When their path is not brightened by the light of advantage, they continue to serve their God! That is the only manner in which God can be served. A holy God cannot be served by unholy hands. A consistent God cannot be served by sporadic manners. A loving God cannot be served by loveless hearts. A thoughtful God cannot be served by thoughtless deeds. A deliberate and purposeful God cannot be served by rote.

And now it becomes very apparent to Nebuchadnezzar why these three young men would not bow down to his image. They were servants of the most high God! When the king had threatened them, they had plainly declared, “our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace” (Dan 3:17). May the Lord grant that an army of such servants may rise up in our generation, and in this place!

COME FORTH !

“ . . . come forth, and come hither.” Now the king summons the three servants of God to come out of the furnace into which he had commanded that they be cast. He knew full well he could not go in and escort them out. His gods were not able to deliver him from the burning fiery furnace, and he knew that all too well.

The King Spoke Differently

Compare this word to the brashness of the previous conduct of this king. “Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace” (Dan 3:20). This is the same man, but he has been humbled by the mighty God of heaven! As this very king will confess later, “the King of heaven . . . is able to abase” (Dan 4:37).

Suffering child of God, you must believe this is the case. God WILL “avenge His own elect,” even though He often “bears long with them” (Luke 18:7). Circumstance may seem to justify the thought that you are alone, but you are not. If you will look about in “the furnace of affliction,” you will see there is someone there beside you!

THEY CAME FROM THE FIRE

“Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.” The faith of the young men had made them bold, but not brash and insolent. They did not shout back at the king in

disrespect, but glorified the Lord by conducting themselves honorably.

As Joseph came out of prison, the three came out of the fire. They came out of confinement like Israel came out of Egypt. They exited from a hopeless condition like Lazarus came out of the tomb. They did not come from the edge of the fire, but from “the midst of the fire.”

They Remained Until Given the Word

We must not miss the fact that these three men continued walking in the furnace until the king called for them to come out. They did not presume to come out as soon as they were loosed. The reason for this is the will of the Lord. All three of them knew what they should do, for they were walking with a heavenly representative, and were unwilling to leave that glorious fellowship for freedom outside of the furnace.

David said, “For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psa 84:10). He was not suggesting that a day in the courts of the Lord meant he was free from trouble. That glorious day may be enjoyed while in a furnace like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,. It may be realized while imprisoned with your feet in stocks, like Paul and Silas. God can send such a day when you have a thorn like Paul, or have been stoned and left for dead, like Paul. I will tell you that the fellowship of the “forth man” removed any fear of the fire, or dread of the furnace. Divine fellowship – fellowship with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:3) – is so precious you can walk in the fire while enjoying it.

The Fourth Man Did Not Come Out

You will note that the “fourth man” did not come out with the three servants of God. He was not sent to testify to Nebuchadnezzar and his counselors, but to walk with the three in the fire of trial.

There are some lofty spiritual experiences that may only be had in the heat of trial – the burning fiery furnace.

- Enoch walked 300 years with God in the midst of a generation so wicked, it would have to be destroyed by God (Gen 5:22-24).
- Noah walked with God while dwelling with a cursed generation (
- Moses saw the glory of God after he had witnessed the rebellion of the people (Ex 32:19; 34:6).
- Elijah heard the still small voice of the Lord while running from the wrath of wicked Jezebel (1 Kgs

19:12).

- The Lord spoke comfortingly to Paul in the midst of a life-threatening storm (Acts 27:23-25).

SOME APPLICATIONS

The enemies of God's people can be brought to acknowledge the saints superiority in this world – like Pharaoh had to acknowledge the God of Moses. However, this is not always the case. Sihon did not acknowledge Israel or their God, but was obstinate to the end (Num 21:23-24). Neither Pilate nor Herod acknowledged the Lord Jesus, but are noted for gathering together against Him (Acts 4:26). We should not expect the Lord to always deliver as He did in the case of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. We should, however, believe that He can.

Ultimately, the enemies of the people of God will acknowledge they were loved by the Lord – and do so to the glory of God. As it is written, “Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee ” (Rev 3:9). This is no doubt involved in the saints judgment of the world (1 Cor 6:2).

The heathen and the wicked can be compelled to acknowledge the Lord.

- PHARAOH twice confessed he had sinned against God. “I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked” (Ex. 9:27). “I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only” (Ex 10:16-17).
- BALAAM , who prophesied for wages, and was anything but a model of behavior, said, “I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again” (Num 22:34).
- NAAMAN , captain of the host of the king of Syria was brought to say, “Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel” (2 Ki 5:15). However, in this world, our enemies do not consistently do so, and we should not expect that they will. We should, however, believe this is possible, and may very well happen in our case.

God could have subdued the fire , as He did for the children of Israel during the plague of the hail and fire (Ex 9:23-26). He could have delivered them from the fire altogether, as He did Lot from the fiery holocaust of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:16). Instead, He enabled His servants to stand in the midst of the fire, at its hottest point.

You must be able to associate this circumstance with your own trials. The Lord may choose to simply remove you from the trial instantly and completely. He may subdue your oppressor before you.

He also may allow your oppressor to appear to have the dominance over you, in order that the superiority and triumph of your faith may be more evident. He may also choose to leave you in “the furnace of affliction” for an extended period. If that is the case, you will not be there alone. The Lord Himself will be with you. The Holy Spirit will be your Helper and Intercessor. The Lord Jesus will be with you, and faithfully intercede for you. In addition, the holy angels will be there to minister to you. That is their appointed role, That is the truth, and you can rely on it! Fill your mind with these thoughts. Ponder them. Let them support you in hard times, and sustain you in the wilderness.

A PUBLIC TESTIMONY

“ 27 And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.”

The faithful three had been publically condemned, and openly thrown into the fiery furnace. Now they will be publically exonerated. Until this time came, they were granted the fellowship of a messenger from heaven. He stayed with them throughout their tenure in the furnace. As long as they were in the furnace, that “fourth man” received the attention. Now, however, the Lord will focus the spotlight upon the three who kept the faith. The angel will recede into the background to be a minister in a less apparent way.

WITNESSED BY ALL

“And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men . . .” From the king’s standpoint, these men had been assembled to witness the execution of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – men they no doubt hated. However, that view is a secondary one, not a primary one. Actually, from the heavenly vantage point, this assembly had convened to see what the Lord had done. Nebuchadnezzar has already called attention to “the Most High God.” Now the princes, governors, captains, and counselors, together with Nebuchadnezzar, will see what great things the Lord has done.

The Ways of the Lord

It is the Lord’s way to oftentimes work in this manner. Dire circumstances are like an arid desert, that, were it not for the grace of God, would drain all strength from the saints. God can make the desert “rejoice, and blossom as the rose,” teeming with life before all who are there to behold it (Isa 35:1). Speaking of this conversion of desert places the Lord says, “It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God ” (Isa 35:2). The latter

circumstance is the reason for the former!

What is happening in our text is a small scale depiction of what Isaiah declared will happen on a large scale. “For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory” (Isa 66:18). In this text, God has gathered the key people of Babylon together to see His glory, His works, and His care for His people. According to appearance, Nebuchadnezzar had gathered them together to bow before the image he had made. When the three children of Judah refused to bow, this entourage remained to see them consumed by a man-made furnace. But this was not really why they were there. This was God, in His own inscrutable way, working things together for the good of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego . It is His manner to do this.

The Manner of Some

It is the manner of some to prematurely disengage their minds when facing oppression. They give up too quickly, and fail to wait upon the Lord. Such people would have viewed the demands of the king as a dreadful threat. Their fear and doubt would have been enhanced as they saw the three young men condemned by the king, as though his word could negate the decree of the Lord. How they would have fainted as they witnessed the men being bound by the strongest men in the king’s army. And when they were thrown into the midst of the fire, with those who threw them in being killed by the leaping flames, they would have sighed, “It is all over now. How tragic to meet such an end!”

But it was not over. All of these events were but a prelude to Divine deliverance. They were the setting of the stage for the exaltation of God’s faithful servants.

POWERLESS FIRE

“ . . . upon whose bodies the fire had no power . . . ” Other versions read, “the fire had no effect upon the bodies of these men,” NASB “the fire had not harmed their bodies,” NIV “the fire had not touched them.” NLT Remember, this was a fire that was “seven times hotter.”

The flames that leaped out of the furnace slew those casting the faithful three into its midst. That fire certainly had power over the bodies of the Chaldean strong men. But it has no power upon the bodies of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It was not that their bodies were any different. It was their God that was different!

God had power over the fire, and demanded it not to harm the bodies of His servants – not even in the most minuscule way. Scripture speaks of an angel who “has power (or “authority” NRSV) over fire” NIV (Rev 14:18). Perhaps he was dispatched to this scene to protect the young men. Whether the Lord Himself or an angel with authority over the fire, the same fire consumed some, yet could not touch others. A fiery trial that consumed one, was powerless over others. It had no power over these men because God would not allow it to have such power. God did not make their bodies noncombustible, but

took away the power of the fire – and every one saw it.

NOT A HAIR WAS SINGED

“ . . . nor was an hair of their head singed . . . ” Note – “an hair,” a single one! The word “singed” means to be superficially or lightly burned. Singeing occurs when something is passed rapidly over a flame. It never occurs by prolonged exposure to fire. But there was no brief exposure of these men to the flames of the furnace that was heated seven times hotter. Not only had they fallen down bound in the middle of the furnace, they had been walking about in the midst of the flame for some time. Yet, not a single hair of their head was even slightly singed!

Do not forget that hair is the part of our body that burns more quickly, and is more readily subject to the flame. It represents the very first stage of fire having power over our bodies. It is possible to have your hair singed, yet remain unharmed from the fire. Further, the smallest flame can singe.

When you think of the hair of the head, do not limit yourself to the top of the head. Include the eyebrows and the beard. Then consider what a miracle is before you, that not a single one of all of those hairs was even slightly singed.

God had fulfilled in these men what He had promised through Isaiah . “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee ” (Isa 43:2). As I have already mentioned, this was quenching the violence of fire, as mentioned in Hebrews 11:34.

COATS UNCHANGED

“ . . . neither were their coats changed . . . ” Other versions read, “neither were their garments affected,” NKJV “nor were their trousers damaged,” NASB “their robes were not scorched,” NIV “their tunics were not harmed,” NRSV “their mantles were not harmed,” RSV “their clothing was not scorched,” NLT and “neither were their hosen changed.” DARBY

I have provided these various translations to show how vain etymologists can be, throwing words about while missing the meaning and intent of the passage. The Hebrew word translated “coats” in our text is a dubious one, with an unclear specific meaning. It can mean anything from a mantel, or outer garment, to a slipper. It is similar to our words “attire” and “clothing.” In our text the intent is not to highlight a specific piece of clothing, but to show the fire had no power over their garments – any of them. It certainly did not burn up their tunics, but leave their shoes, or consume their coats, but leave their trousers and turbines.

From another point of view, their bonds were gone, but their clothing remained unchanged in

any way. No part of it was missing, altered, singed, or in any way affected by the fire. Anything directly associated with these faithful men, including their bodies, their hair, and their clothing, was completely impervious to the fire. It had not one whit of power or effect on any part of them – except their bonds .

NO SMELL OF FIRE

“ . . . nor the smell of fire had passed on them.” Other versions read, “the smell of fire was not on them,” NKJV “nor had the smell of fire even come upon them,” NIV “and not even the smell of fire came from them,” NRSV “and no smell of fire had come upon them,” RSV “they didn’t even smell of smoke,” NLT and “and the smell of fire hath not passed on them.” YLT

The idea is not merely that as these young men stood before the king’s nobles, there was no smell of fire upon them. Rather, the point is that it was never upon them – either in or out of the furnace! Fire does have an undeniable odor, and wherever it had been, that odor is left behind. When you cook meat over an open fire, the smell of the fire will linger with the meat for a remarkable amount of time. But such an aroma never one time came upon these men – not on their bodies, their hair, or their clothing. Not only could the fire not consume them, it could not singe them, or leave a smell upon them – not even a trace! The fire to which Nebuchadnezzar had consigned these men for destruction could not leave the slightest evidence of its presence upon them. They were completely free from any fiery influence.

SUCCESSFUL BABYLONIAN BURNINGS

The Babylonians, or Chaldeans, were not always unsuccessful in their burnings. Some years earlier, Nebuchadnezzar had sacked Jerusalem. Of that occasion it is written, “And he burnt the house of the LORD , and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem , and every great man's house burnt he with fire” (2 Ki 25:9). At that point, he appeared to be quite successful in the use of fire. However, in our text, he could not in any way burn the servants of God: not their bodies, not their hair, and not their clothing. He could not even get the smell of fire upon them. It was because of their God!

THE PROGRESSIVE EMPHASIS

Notice how the Spirit describes the deliverance of God’s servants. In a progressive manner He brings glory to God, beginning with the general and advancing to the particular.

- Fire had no power over their bodies.
- Not a hair was singed.
- Their clothing was unaffected.
- The smell of fire was not upon them.

Here is another thing to consider. There was absolutely no evidence that they had ever been in the fire! Unless you had seen these men in the fire, there was nothing whatsoever but testimony that could confirm they had been in a fiery furnace – heated seven times hotter than it ever was before.

SOME APPLICATIONS

- Trials can be severe. It is possible for the people of God to develop an erroneous view of victory and triumph. Satan would have us believe that victory means there are no battles, no tests, no pushing us to the limit. But this is not so. Some of God's people have "fiery trials" (1 Pet 4:12). Others endure a "great fight of afflictions" (Heb 10:32). It is possible to be "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life" (2 Cor 1:8). There are very real experiences for the faithful described as "troubled on every side," "perplexed," and "cast down" (2 Cor 4:9). Even our Lord Jesus "suffered being tempted" (Heb 2:18), and His soul was "exceeding sorrowful" (Matt 26:38). Do not be dismayed, dear child of God, when you are asked to pass through deep waters. You have the promise of God, "they shall not overflow thee" (Isa 43:2).
- For a season, our enemies may appear to be stronger and wiser than we are. Do not be confused when those who despise you appear to have greater strength than you. That is only the way it appears, it is not the way it really is. It is said of the devil, your ultimate and most formidable enemy, "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). If that is true of the most challenging enemy, it is even more true of those meager foes who are your peers.
- God will not allow our trials to be greater than our faith. This is the promise of God, and there is not the slightest chance that it is not true. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Cor 10:13). Your ability is not limited to your own personal strength. It is sometimes enhanced by the presence of an angel, as with the three in our text. It is ever true, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2 Pet 2:9). You must not waste your time pondering when and how your trial will end. That is in the hands of the Lord. Draw close to Him, and he will be the more inclined to deliver you. He does know how!
- God will vindicate our faith. Jesus said, "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth" (Luke 18:7-8). There are trials that find the children of God crying out to Him night and day, with no apparent relief in sight. But that is only what seems to be. The truth is that God is bearing long with us, giving us spiritual strength, so to speak, a spoonful at the time. But He will come through, avenging His people, and taking up their cause. He will do it "speedily," or quickly. The only question is whether the Son of Man will find faith on the earth when He comes – people who are convinced of that truth, and are waiting patiently for it.
- When the trial is over, there will be nothing according to appearance that will confirm it ever existed. As a child of God, you have already passed through very difficult times. Yet, unless you tell the rest of us of those trials, or we have personally observed them, we have no way of knowing you have gone through them. The evidence of the trial is not clinging to you like the smell of fire did not settle on the three men of our text. If you are presently enduring a great test of your faith, you must believe the same will be true after it is over.
- There is more than one kind of furnace. There surely is more than one kind of furnace. There is a

furnace that consumes, like that displayed in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:26). As long as you have faith, believing God, you will never pass through that kind of furnace. There is the “iron furnace” that enslaves for a long period of time, like Israel was enslaved in Egypt (Deut 4:20). The people of God can survive a furnace like that – even one that burns for 430 years. That, of course, is much longer than any trial a single child of God will be asked to bear. There is the furnace of refinement, when the soul is being further developed and refined by the Lord (Prov 17:3). It is also called “the furnace of affliction,” and God chooses people in that furnace (Isa 48:10). There is where you lose your dross – the things that cannot transport into glory. In whatever furnace faith puts you, it will keep you. Believe that!

- There is a Divine fellowship that can only be realized in times of great difficulty. There is a closeness to God and a degree of Divine fellowship that can only be experienced in trouble. There is praise that can only be sung in the prison (Acts 16:25). There is a determination that can only be made while you are experiencing the piercing effects of a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:5-10). There is a suffering that is appropriately called “the sufferings of Christ,” and they can “abound in us” (2 Cor 1:5a). The appointed effects of these sufferings are seen a corresponding consolation that is also caused to abound in us by the power of God : “so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ” (2 Cor 1:5b). The experience of these is referred to as suffering with Christ (Rom 8:17). They qualify us to be “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17).

However you may view your suffering, trouble, testing, or opposition, there is a “fourth man” in it with you. You are not alone, and you are free to walk about in heavenly fellowship! You must not allow yourself to gaze at the flames about you, or the dingy furnace in which you seem to be walking. Rather, pay attention to the means God has given to you – means that enable you to survive, even the furnace!

BLESSED BE THE GOD

“ 28a Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him . . . ” With the young men standing before him the king now speaks. Keep in mind, he is not speaking out of a sense godly of conviction, nor out of faith. Rather, he is acknowledging something he cannot deny. He will bless God, but he will not consent to serve him. Even so, his words exceed those of some who confess the name of Christ, and have access to greater spiritual insight than Nebuchadnezzar ever dreamed possible. He speaks these words before the dignitaries of his kingdom, not because of any faith he had in God, but because of convicting fear, which is a virtue found in the outer court of man’s approach to God. What he says is good. Even though it did not capture his heart, we must allow it to capture ours, for we have a greater capacity to appreciate what he said than he did.

THE GOD OF SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO

“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego . . .” Another version reads, “Praise be to the God of.” NIV This is valid blessing, but not of the quality of those who are committed to God. Compare this with the blessing of the sweet Psalmist of Israel: “A Psalm of David. Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's” (Psa 103:1-5). There is no commitment in the king's words, and no note of thanksgiving. This is the acknowledgment of a man whose counsels have been overturned. He admits this is the God of the three he condemned, but makes no claim that it is his God.

There are precious few people with which God has allowed Himself to be so identified: i.e., “the God of . . .” Here are some of them.

- “The God of Abraham” (Gen 26:24).
- “The God of Isaac” (Gen 28:13).
- “The God of Nahor” (Gen 31:53).
- “The God of Jacob” (Psa 20:1).
- “The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3:15).
- “The God of the Hebrews” (Ex 5:3).
- “The God of Israel” (Ex 24:10).
- “The God of Jeshurun” (a symbol name for Israel Deut 33:26).
- “The God of David” (2 Kings 20:5).
- “The God of Hezekiah” (2 Chron 32:17).
- “The God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego” (Dan 3:28-29).
- “The God of Daniel” (Dan 6:26).

The Meaning of the Expression

There is a twofold meaning to the expression “The God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” Nebuchadnezzar perceived something of both meanings, but not in their entirety, or anything near their totality.

First, He was their God because they honored and served Him – even to the point of death. Not even a demand from the most powerful king upon the earth could move them to serve anyone else. He was their God by their choice.

Second, it was evident He was their God because He came to their aid, and delivered them from the king's curse . Nothing could stop the Lord from effectively protecting them, even if it was a burning fiery furnace, heated sever times hotter than it ever was before. He was their God by His own Sovereign choice.

HE SENT HIS ANGEL

Before, Nebuchadnezzar said he saw a fourth man who was like a son of the gods. Now, he declares that personage was nothing less than an angel sent from the God of heaven. At first, the king had not associated that angel with a messenger from the God of gods – as one who was a sort of god himself – at least in the mind of the king. Now, however, he becomes more aware of the “Lord of kings” (2:47), than of the angels He sends.

Nebuchadnezzar was not familiar with the vast amount of teaching on angels that has been given to us. His words were not framed by one who had expertise in spiritual matters. These words were put into his mouth by the Lord of glory, in order that we might be taught by them. From an earthly point of view, the king knew the “God of heaven,” whom Daniel had previously declared to him (2:37,44) had a heavenly court that did His bidding and served His interests. Thus he reasoned it was “ HIS angel,” and not a powerful spiritual being acting on his own. But all of that was merely on the surface so far as Nebuchadnezzar was concerned. The significance of his words is not found in the fact that he said them, but that the Holy Spirit moved Daniel to record them in Scripture. In them, God was confirming to His people the many statements He has given us about His angels.

The Lord has confirmed the angels have been appointed to minister who those who are the heirs of salvation. For this reason, they have a keen interest in the affairs of men, particularly in regards to the children of God.

- ISRAEL’S DELIVERANCE. “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old” (Isa 63:9).
- REMOVING THE WICKED. “The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity” (Mat 13:41)
- GATHERING THE RIGHTEOUS. “And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mat 24:31).
- ASSISTING JESUS. “And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him” (Mark 1:13).
- AT JESUS’ BIRTH. “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us” (Luke 2:13-15).

- **WHEN MEN REPENT.** “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:10).
- **WHEN THE GODLY DIE.** “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried” (Luke 16:22).
- **HEALING THE SICK.** “In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had” (John 5:4).
- **DELIVERING THE APOSTLES.** “And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said” (Acts 5:19).
- **ASSISTING SEEKERS.** “He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God” (Acts 10:3-4).
- **PRESENT IN ASSEMBLIES.** “For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels” (1 Cor 11:10).
- **INTERESTED IN THE GOSPEL.** “Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (1 Pet 1:12).

It is true, Nebuchadnezzar did not have the knowledge of these things. However, the point of our text is NOT what the king said, but what the Lords did! The king's words are incidental. He was to three Hebrew children what Balaam's ass was to him (Num 22:27-33). God used him to deliver a comforting and joyous message to the faithful, both in Daniel's day, and in ours.

AND DELIVERED HIS SERVANTS

“ . . . and delivered His servants . . . ” This angel had no interest in the Babylonians, for he was not a minister to them. Consequently he did nothing about the mighty men who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace. They died without any Divine intervention. Angels have no interest in men and women in general, but in those to whom they are sent by God!

Thus the angel of the Lord delivered God's servants, who had chosen to reject the appeal of a heathen god to simply bow before a golden image. In this case, they were servants of God because of

what they did NOT do.

Mark it well, God is served by what the godly do NOT do , as well as what they do. When men refuse to bow to the gods of this world, they are serving the Lord in that refusal. By the same token, those who DO yield to the pressures of this world, by that very posture, cease to serve God.

There are two sides to serving the Lord – doing the good, and refusing the evil. Thus it is written, “Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: He preserveth the souls of his saints; He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked” (Psa 97:10). This very exhortation was no doubt known to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and they faithfully lived it out.

The grace of God enables us to be faithful servants of God, thus qualifying us for deliverance. It teaches us in both of these areas: doing good and rejecting evil. It is written, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Not only had the three young men been faithful servants of God prior to this deliverance, they had been freed in order to continue in His service. We ought to have a high regard for this, for we also have been liberated to serve the Lord. “As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God ” (1 Pet 2:16).

From another point of view, the servants of God are those who “obey” Him. As it is written, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey , his servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom 6:17). The angels of God are still devoted to those who obey the Lord. They minister to those who “shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb 1:14), and that “great salvation” is given by Jesus “to all who obey Him” NKJV (Heb 5:9).

Why These Things Are Said

I say these things because of the times in which we are living. Serving God is rarely associated with obeying Him. Generally people associate serving God with some aspect of religious institutional service, often called “a ministry.” Thus, all manner of carnally minded people are engaged in what they call service to God. Yet, their service has the taint of the world upon it, and they do not relate it to pleasing and obeying the Lord. In this day and age, God is served by young men and women who refuse to bow to the pressures of the world – to people who will not bring the world’s manners into the house of God. Rather, they will refuse to bow to the “images” the world has set up. It is proper for Nebuchadnezzar to speak as one who has been duly impressed by the power of God. But it is never right for a child of God to speak as one who has been unduly impressed by the world. I realize this has a strange sound to it for many, but it is essential that the people of God learn to associate what they do with obeying, honoring, and pleasing the Lord who purchased them.

THAT TRUSTED IN HIM

“ . . . that trusted in Him.” Other versions read, “who put their trust in Him,” NASB , “who trusted on Him,” YLT and “who had faith in Him.” BBE Here is another aspect of being the servants of God – trusting Him ! Trusting involves dependence upon the God – relying upon Him. Trust takes place when the individual puts the weight of his soul upon the Lord, leaning upon Him. It signifies confidence in the Lord, and dependence upon Him.

These young men went into that fire depending upon what the Lord would do, and ready to accept it, whatever it was. Of course, such dependence is not possible where God is not known. However, early in His dealings with the Israelites, God revealed what He was like. He said of Himself, “And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious , longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands , forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin . . .” (Ex 34:6-7).

David, whose writings were no doubt known well to these servants, had said, “The LORD is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my Strength, in whom I will trust ; my Buckler, and the Horn of my salvation, and my High Tower. I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies ” (Psa 18:2-3). It is one thing to know the Bible says such things it is quite another to depend upon them – to TRUST the Lord to be and do what He has said He is and does.

We ought to note that distrusting , or failing to trust the Lord, is the mother of all disobedience, slothfulness, unfaithfulness, and the failure to grow in grace and truth. All backsliding, lukewarmness, moral failure, and apostasy are the direct result of NOT trusting the Lord.

What About You?

And what about you, dear believer? Are you trusting the Lord? Are you depending on Him to come through as He has promised? Remember, it is written, “For this is contained in Scripture: “BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED ” (1 Pet 2:6). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not disappointed, and you will not be either. In your circumstances, regardless of the grief they have caused you, or how hopeless they may appear, put your trust in the Lord. Depend upon His merciful disposition! That disposition is very real, and He is inclined to express it. He is full of mercy, and delights to give it!

CHANGING, YIELDING, AND SERVING

“ 28b . . . and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.” These words are coming from Nebuchadnezzar, but they do not have their origin with him. This assessment is too thorough to have been produced by an idol worshiping and heathen king. There is a profundity in them that could only have come from the Lord Himself. They are an expert analysis of what the Lord has done, “and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor 10:11).

THE KINGS WORD CHANGED

“ . . . and have changed the king's word.” This is a deed attributed to the three condemned men – something they did. Other versions read, “they have frustrated the king’s word,” NKJV “ violating the king’s command,” NASB “ defied the king’s command,” NIV “ disobeyed the king’s command,” NRSV “ set at nought the king’s command,” RSV “and the word of the king changed ,” YLT

The meaning of these poignant words is that these men, by their trust in God, reduced the word of a powerful king to mere babble. They took the power out of his word – a power that had caused everyone else to tremble and bow obediently before the image he had set up.

From another point of view, their trust in the Lord moved them to have no regard whatsoever for this word from the king. It was a word that conflicted with the Word of God, and thus they gave no heed to it. They despised it, counting it as mere rubbish to be thrown in the moral scrapheap. They took his word, and thrust it from them, refusing to honor it or give any heed to it. They did not spend time thinking upon it, but rather trusted in their God. The king, with all of his political and military power, could not make these men disobey God!

How pertinent this account is to us. To this very day, there are people who cannot push vanity from themselves. Like Ananias and Sapphira, they entertain vain thoughts to their own destruction (Acts 5:1-10). There are young men and women who have departed from the Lord because of the suggestions of their peers. It was not the word of a mighty king that caused them to do what was wrong, but a paltry suggestion from a miserably weak and unprincipled person. Such conduct is by no means confined to the young. There are older people who have ceased to trust the Lord as they once did, simply because it would put them at variance with their church friends. There are preachers who do not declare the truth because someone has told them it is not fashionable, and they ought to appeal more to the desires of the people.

But it was not so with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! The purpose of the king’s word was changed, yea utterly frustrated, by their decision to serve the Lord. He could not do what he wanted to, and they would not do what was unlawful.

In view of the fact that we will see these men in the day of judgment, it is to our advantage to live in such a manner as will find no conflict between our conduct and theirs.

YIELDED BODIES

“ . . . and yielded their bodies . . . ” Other versions read, “were willing to give up their lives,” NIV “were willing to die,” NLT “delivered their bodies to be hurt,” Septuagint and “gave up their bodies.” YLT

There is great significance to these words. The ONLY reason to be afraid of the king’s command and the fiery furnace was a consideration of their bodies. The furnace had no power over their souls – only their bodies. Centuries later, Jesus would say, “And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do ” (Luke 12:4). In a sense, these men gave their bodies to the fire, but their souls to the Lord. Peter put it this way, “Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Pet 4:19). In fact, all Nebuchadnezzar could even threaten was their bodies. He had no authority over their souls or their spirits.

Application

The language of this verse reminds me of certain Apostolic teachings. “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom 6:13). And again, “even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19). Is this not a wonderful picture of presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1-2)? You have even more reason to do this than the men of our text, for “your bodies are the members of Christ” (1 Cor 6:15).

SERVING NO OTHER GOD

“ . . . that they might not serve nor worship any god.” These men made a choice – a deliberate and willing choice. Nebuchadnezzar had given them two alternatives. Bow down and worship the image, or be thrown into a burning fiery furnace. They looked at the choices, and did not linger long upon them. Nebuchadnezzar said, “They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any [other] god .” NRSV

To them, it was not a matter of honoring a king, but worshiping a false god!

Application

What are you willing NOT to do to avoid serving other gods? What will it take for you to yield to

the gods of this world? Or, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, have you made up your mind to serve the Lord, regardless of the consequences? That is certainly something to think about!

THEIR OWN GOD

“ . . . except their own God.” Nearly every version reads exactly the same. The only exception I found in regular translations was in the Basic Bible English, BBE which still carries the same meaning: “of any other god but their God.”

There is a sense in which God is “the God of all flesh” (Jer 32:27), whether they acknowledge it or not. He is, in truth, “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (Num 16:22; 27:16). That is not a matter of human choice.

However, that is not the sense of these words. Human choice is reflected in these words, as well as Divine preference. They parallel the words that distinguish the New Covenant : “ . . . and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Cor 6:16). In fact, it is said of those who live by faith and seek a heavenly country, “God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (Heb 11:16). God was certainly not ashamed to be called the God of these young men, for they had trusted in Him, and would not bow to another god.

“My God”

Nebuchadnezzar had spoken of “MY gods” (Dan 3:14). Now, by way of comparison, he acknowledged the three before him have a different God who is more powerful than his.

The words “my God” are mentioned 138 times in Scripture. It is always in the nature of a confession. When Israel was delivered at the Red Sea, they sang, “He is my God” (Ex 15:2). Moses referred to the Lord as “my God” (Deut 26:14), as well as Joshua (Josh 9:23), Ruth (Ruth 1:16), David (2 Sam 22:7), Solomon (1 Kgs 3:7), Elijah (1 Kgs 17:20), Micaiah (1 Chron 18:13), Ezra (Ezra 7:28), Nehemiah (Neh 2:8), Isaiah (Isa 25:1), Daniel (Dan 9:4), Jonah (Jon 2:6), Micah (7:7), Habakkuk, Zechariah (Zech 11:4), the Lord Jesus (Matt 27:46), and Paul (Rom 1:8).

In all of these cases, the attitude and conduct of the people made God “their God.” They served and worshiped Him, and refused to yield themselves to the devil, his hosts, or his ideas. This was done with great consistency.

Previously to our text, the three men who were cast into the fiery furnace confessed “ OUR God, whom we SERVE is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace” (3:17). Now He had done precisely that, and the king admitted the “God of gods and Lord of kings” was, in fact, “their God.” In doing this, he was also admitting God was not his God.

OBSERVATIONS

Nebuchadnezzar knew of God's greatness because of what he saw . We know of it primarily because of what we have heard, and secondarily because of what we have seen. The truth is that God is able to say more about Himself than He is about to presently show us. That is precisely why He has exalted His Word above all of His name. As it is written, "For You have magnified Your word above all Your name" (Psa 138:2).

A high regard for, and ingestion of, the Word of God will yield benefits that are otherwise unobtainable.

A NEW DECREE IS MADE

" 29 Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort."

Thus far, we have read of two of Nebuchadnezzar's decrees. (1) " . . . if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill . . . And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain" (Dan 2:5,13). (2) " . . . a decree , that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (Dan 3:10-11). Now he will make a third one. All three focused on the penalty of failing to meet his demands. The punishment for violating this decree is precisely the same as his first one: "shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill ." There is little originality with this king.

A NEW DECREE

"Therefore I make a decree . . ." A decree is a commandment or judgment to which all are to give heed. It is interesting that after being frustrated in his most recent decree, he resorts to yet another one. It will also be interesting to see just what he decrees. It will further confirm the spiritual impotence of the flesh.

SPEAKING ANYTHING AMISS

“ . . . That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego . . . ” Other versions read, “that speaks anything offensive ,” NASB “who say anything against,” NIV and “that utters blasphemy against.” NRSV

To “speak against” primarily means to misrepresent, or say wrong things about God. This would be something that would lead men to incorrect conclusions about the God of gods – the “God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.”

A Religious Outburst

There is no doubt that Nebuchadnezzar is moved by fear to make this declaration. He had no preference for God, or desire to worship Him. This is the outburst of religious flesh that will soon pass away, being driven by impetuosity and not faith. It is like a knee-jerk reaction, not one that is thought out, or results from pondering the work of the Lord. It ought to be noted that there is an approach to religion that seeks to obtain such responses – instant and without depth. A lot of the “bow-your-head-and-raise-your-hand” invitations fall into this category. They are more fleshly than spiritual, and rely little upon the Word and power of the Lord. Too often, they are mere emotional appeals, made on the spur of the moment with no intention to glorify God in them.

The Forbidden Accented

Note, the king made no personal determination to worship the true God, or to serve Him. He did not take down his image, or purpose to destroy it. Flesh will not and cannot bow to God or serve Him. When faced with certain incontestable facts, it can bring itself to admit they are true. Yet, it will not yield to that truth.

When Manasseh, an exceedingly wicked king, “knew that the Lord He was God,” he straightway “took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city” (2 Chr 33:15). But Nebuchadnezzar did no such thing. He “made a decree.” His decree was not to worship God, but simply not to say anything against Him. No real conviction was found in him, and no desire to serve the Lord and amend his ways. That is the way flesh is. It will concede to refrain from this or that, but will not present itself to God. It simply cannot do that.

When the lame man at the gate called Beautiful was healed, the enemies of Jesus vigorously opposed what was done and who did it. Yet they were quite willing to confess, “that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it ” (Acts 4:16). Yet, rather than submitting themselves to Jesus, they threatened those who declared Him to “speak henceforth to no man in this Name,” commanding them “not to speak at all or teach in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:16-17). Those who heard Stephen preach so powerfully “were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:10). But they did not turn from their traditions to worship Jesus, but rather chose to stone His messenger.

The people of God must learn to spot religious flesh. There are some aspects of fear in it, but never enough to fully yield to the Lord. It insists upon staying close to the earth, and consequently at a distance from the Lord. Beware of a religion that decrees what you are not to do, but never gets around to insisting that God be honored and served.

THE PENALTY

“ . . . shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill . . . ” This is precisely the same penalty held before the Chaldean wise men when Nebuchadnezzar demanded they tell him his dream and its interpretation – word for word (2:5). I do not doubt that such a decree in our country would result in mass and unfathomable bloodshed. There are a lot of people, even religious people, who speak derogatorily about God, as though He was one of their peers.

- “I am angry with God.”
- “Where was God when I needed Him?”
- “Where was God when _____ was abused, and people killed?”
- “If God is all powerful, why doesn’t He stop all the wars and trouble?”
- “God really does not know everything.”
- “God will love you no matter what you do.”
- “God loves the sinners but hates the sin.”
- “God did not love Judas any less than He loved Paul.”
- “I cannot believe God would demand the shedding of blood to get rid of sin.”
- “God will only take rewards away from those who return to sin. He will never take their names out of the book of life.”
- “God is cruel.”

These are only representative of statements I have personally heard from professing Christians. Perhaps you have heard similar ones. I suppose the threat of death might stop such things from occurring – at least for a while.

Such a decree might be effective in stopping wayward souls from blaspheming God, but it will never cause one to worship God “in Spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). Neither will it constrain a person to “yield their bodies to fire,” choosing to serve the Lord alone.

Here is how Jesus addressed the matter of speaking against God. You may compare it with the decree of Nebuchadnezzar. “Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (Mat 12:32).

As you can see, Jesus placed the emphasis upon turning to the Lord and honoring Himself. He also held

eternal judgment for speaking against the Holy Spirit.

It is the peculiar prerogative of faith to move people to embrace the good as well as reject the evil. Wherever genuine faith is found, the issue of speaking against God is instantly resolved, as well as the matter of worshiping and serving Him.

THERE IS NO OTHER GOD THAT CAN . . .

“ . . . because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.” Take careful note that Nebuchadnezzar does NOT say there is no other God, but only that there is no other God who can deliver like the God of the Hebrew men.

While it may appear to be a very technical matter, God is not duly honored because He can deliver us. That is surely true, but more is expected of men than seeking deliverance from the Lord! It is God Himself that is to be sought, not what He can do. That is His appointment for people, and they do well to give heed to it. “From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him , though He is not far from each one of us. 'For in Him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are His offspring” NIV (Acts 17:26-28).

Nebuchadnezzar was absolutely correct in what he said, but he did not say enough. God has accented His Person. It is in light of who He is that what He does takes on significance. Without duly considering WHO God is, our own dilemmas obtain too much importance in our eyes, and we miss the blessing. He wants us to find HIM more fully.

- God is light (1 John 1:5).
- God is love (1 John 4:8)
- God is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29).
- God is a our refuge and strength, a very present help in the time of trouble (Psa 46:1).
- God is the King of the earth (Psa 47:7).
- God is judge Himself (Psa 50:6).
- God is my defense (Psa 59:9).
- God is a refuge for us (Psa 62:8).
- God is the God of salvation (Psa 68:20).
- The Lord God is a sun and a shield (Psa 84:11).
- God is holy (Psa 99:9).
- God is merciful (Psa 116:5).
- God is faithful (1 Cor 1:9).
- God is wiser than men (1 Cor 1:23).
- God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor 14:33).
- God is true (2 Cor 1:18).

When we stand in “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” (2 Cor 4:6), everything else becomes more plain, and is seen more clearly. That is precisely what is meant by the expression, “For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:9).

The recognition of these things goes far beyond delivering men from a fiery furnace, yet does not diminish that deliverance one whit. Those who know God Himself are not surprised at the rescue of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. However, those who are forced not to say anything false or against God would be as surprised at such a deliverance as Nebuchadnezzar was.

The king would have been more wise to issue a decree to seek the Lord, citing the deliverance of these three men as an excellent reason to do so. However, flesh does not think in this way – yea, cannot think this manner. It has no capacity to do so.

God did work through this decree to reduce opposition to the Jews. He can do something like that through the heathen. But when it comes to the building up, or edification, of His people, that will come from Daniel, not Nebuchadnezzar! Spiritual work demands spiritual workers

PROMOTION FROM THE LORD

“ 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.” Even though these young men were already “over the affairs of Babylon,” the king now advances them even further. His mind has been changed toward them, as he has been humiliated by their preservation.

THEN THE KING PROMOTED

It seems to me that the promotion of these men was God’s way of getting the testimony of their deliverance among the Chaldeans. Perhaps the people had heard of their refusal to obey the king. Now they would hear of God’s deliverance of them. Maybe it would even be written in the Babylonian chronicles of their kings. I say this “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psa 75:6-7). Furthermore, God does nothing “without cause” (Ezek 14:23). A Divine PURPOSE is not served by causeless actions.

We may therefore conclude that higher purposes were being served than the temporary exaltation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Remember, this book is about the working of the Lord, not the activities of men, whether they be Chaldeans or Jews.

THE LAST WE HEAR OF THEM

Concluding with this word, the words “Shadrach,” “Meshach,” and “Abednego” are never again mentioned in Scripture, nor are their Hebrew names Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan 1:6). We do not know when or where they died. Even as David served “his own generation” well (Acts 13:36), so did they. We will now await the time when we will see them in the glory, and express our appreciation for the glowing testimony they left behind. Truly, “their works do follow them” (Rev 14:13). Now, our attention will be turned to the productive ministry of Daniel.

APPLICATION

When we put our trust in the Lord, and serve only Him, whatever the cost, the most profitable future will be ministered to us. Part of trusting the Lord is knowing He will chart the most excellent course for us. If, however, we choose to direct our own path, we will fall upon difficulties that will be our demise. God will not allow people to permanently prosper who do not live for Him. But for those who choose yield themselves to Him, the benefits they receive can transport into glory. Their works can “follow them.”

CONCLUSION

We have dealt with another of the better known passages of Scripture. That circumstance, however, can work against us. I have found that well known Scriptures are, for the most part, viewed in a shallow and unproductive manner. Grace can deliver us from such a dilemma, however, showing us precious gems of truth that lie beneath the surface of the truth. The spirit of man cannot be sustained by popular texts and favorite verses – as popular as that may appear.

New manna needs to be gathered by the saints, and the horizon of spiritual awareness expanded. Growth, in other words, is imperative. The lack of depth belongs to Nebuchadnezzar. The depth of truth belongs to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The knowledge that Nebuchadnezzar had could never have delivered him from the burning fiery furnace. It took the faith of the faithful three to work such a deliverance.

Heavenly messengers do not come down to fellowship with the lukewarm, indifferent, and immature. There must be a closeness with the Lord before you can accompany Him to the Mount of transfiguration or the Garden of Gethsemane! I do not believe this is generally recognized among the professing church.

We must learn the manner of the Kingdom from accounts like this. It is ever true, “They also who dwell in the farthest parts are afraid of Your signs; You make the outgoings of the morning and

evening rejoice” (Psa 65:8). That is, being at a distance from the Lord makes it more difficult to see what He is doing and hear what He is saying. Consequently, when He finally gets the attention of such people, it is a frightening experience. Walk in the light, and you will be sustained, have fellowship with the saints, and experience cleansing from all sin (1 John 1:7).

ONE LAST WORD

If you are presently enduring a “great fight of afflictions” (Heb 10:32), do not despair. You are living under a “better covenant” that is established upon “better promises” (Heb 8:6). If the Lord was faithful to deliver his children under an inferior covenant, He surely will not abandon you under a superior one. If not already there, help is on the way! He has seen and heard you, and will avenge you “speedily.” There is a “fourth man” for you, just as surely as there was for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Hold on, and keep the faith!

The Prophecy of Daniel

NEBUCHADNEZZAR TESTIFIES AND HAS A DREAM

Lesson #13

INTRODUCTION

Nebuchadnezzar is one of the significant characters of Scripture. Ninety-one references to this king are found in the Word of God. He is mentioned as “Nebuchadnezzar” sixty times in the Scriptures, and as “Nebuchad r ezzar” thirty-one times. Books referring to him by these two names include 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Thirty-two of these references are found in the book of Daniel. Jeremiah and Ezekiel contain all of the references to “Nebuchad r ezzar” (Jer 21:2,7; 22:25; 24:1; 25:1,9; 29:21; 32:1,28; 35:11; 37:1; 39:1,11; 43:10; 44:30;

46:2,13,26,28,30; 50:17; 51:34; 52:4;12,28,29,30; Ezek 26:7; 29:18,19; 30:10).

However, although this man is mentioned so frequently in Scripture, he is always incidental, and never primary. He is never held forth as a model of conduct, a paragon of virtue, or an individual with great faith. He was Babylonian when first introduced to us (2 Kgs 24:1), and at the last as well. The last Scriptural reference to him is found in this chapter (verse 37). He had been humbled by God and praised, extolled, and honored the God of heaven. He never acknowledged the God of heaven to be his God, nor did he devote himself to the worship and service of Him.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

History records a great number of Nebuchadnezzar's exploits and accomplishments. I will take the liberty to mention some of them here because they are germane to the development of the text before us. All of this information was taken from McClintok and Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature It is heralded as "one of the most exhaustive encyclopedias ever produced in the English language," Cyril J. Barber having over 31,000 entries contained in twelve large volumes.

- He defeated Pharaoh-Nech, king of Egypt, and recovered Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine, also taking Jerusalem (Jer 66:2-12; Dan 1:1-2).
- He came against Jerusalem two more times, utterly devastating it the third time.
- Defeated Tyre and Phoenicia (Jer 66:13-26).
- Conquered a great part of Africa and Spain.
- Rebuilt the temple of Bel (Bel-Merodach).
- Thoroughly renovated the city of Babylon.
- Completed and adorned the walls and gates of Babylon.
- Constructed a magnificent new palace, "a superb edifice completed in fifteen days.
- Build the famous "hanging gardens," built of huge stones and planted with trees and shrubs of every kind. The area was four-hundred feet square and seventy-five feet high.
- Made engines by which water was raised from the river to the surface of the hanging gardens.

- Throughout the Babylonian empire, “in Borsippa, Sippara, Cutha, Chilmad, Duraba, Teredon, and a multitude of other places, he built or rebuilt cities, repaired temples, constructed quays (structures built parallel to waterways for landings), reservoirs, canals, and aqueducts, on a scale of grandeur and magnificance surpassing everything of the king recorded in history.”
- Dug the Nahr Malcha, or Royal River, which was a branch stream of the Euphrates.
- Made a great reservoir above the city of Sippara, ninety miles in circumference and one hundred and twenty feet deep.
- Placed sluices, or flood gates, in the reservoir which enabled him to irrigate the low country.
- Built a quay (large landing place) along the Red Sea (Persian Gulf).
- Founded the city of Teredon on the borders of Arabia.
- Created a network of canals which covered the vast area between the Euphrates River and the stony desert.
- Built a single canal, still to be traced, which left the Euphrates at the city of Hit, and skirting the desert ran southeast a distance of four hundred miles to the Persian Gulf, where it emptied into the bay of Grane.
- Maintained a sophisticated form of government consisting of princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counselors, sheriffs, and rulers of provinces (Dan 3:2-3).

THE REASON FOR THIS

I have taken the time to relate this information because it is the world’s assessment of Nebuchadnezzar. From any human perspective, this was a most unusual, successful, and innovative king. Yet, while he did extend effort in all of these accomplishments, they were not owing to his own wisdom, strength, or creativity. The Word of God accounts for his success – and not in uncertain words.

A PICTURE OF THE FLESH

All of this prepares the way for the fourth chapter of Daniel. We have a man singularly benefitted by the God of heaven, and yet, he was unable to obtain any consistency in giving God glory. In him we have a vivid portrayal of the flesh. It is unable to learn from God beyond surface impressions. The flesh always gravitates downward, choosing first to rely upon men and earthly resources. That is its unchangeable manner. It “profits nothing” (John 6:63), and in it “dwells no good thing” (Rom 7:18).

The Lord can heap unparalleled benefits on the flesh, and it will puff up with pride like Nebuchadnezzar, or murmur like Israel in the wilderness. If the flesh is undeniably confronted with God, it becomes frightened like Israel at Sinai, or Nebuchadnezzar at the mouth of the burning fiery furnace. But not much time will elapse until flesh forgets that confrontation, like Israel at the foot of the holy mount, or Nebuchadnezzar twelve months later, boasting of his achievements in the palace (Dan 4:29-30).

All of the efforts to reform the flesh are vain, for flesh cannot rise above its source : “that which is born of flesh IS flesh” – and it can be nothing more (John 3:6). No good thing is resident in the flesh (Rom 7:18), and nothing good can be put there. This is why Israel became a degenerate plant, even though it had the most noble beginnings possible (Jer 2:21).

This is precisely why godly men and women have no appetite for the flesh, and detest when it is brought into the church as though it was harmless. As soon as people gravitate to the things of the flesh, the things of God begin to wane, and will finally leave their minds altogether. The flesh is a bag with holes that cannot hold the things of God (Hab 1:6). It is a broken cistern that can hold no water (Jer 2:13). It is like an old wineskin into which new life from God cannot be poured (Matt 9:17). Like the devil, who works through it, the flesh cannot be taught, learn from God, or retain the things of God. It forgets what God says, yet retains what the devil says. It does not dwell on the world to come, but on “this present evil world” from which Jesus has delivered us (Gal 1:4). If we required deliverance from this world, it certainly can bring us no eternal benefit! That is why a person becomes “the enemy of God” at the very instant he becomes a “friend of the world” (James 4:4).

If you want to dilute the power and effectiveness of the church, bring the flesh into it. Make its manners of this world. Move its preachers and teachers to shape their concepts and vocabulary by the world’s standards. Penetrate their music with things that do not offend the world. Cut down on the amount of time given to God, and increase the amount of time given to mundane activities. Shape its gatherings so they are not offensive to those who are alienated from God. Move it to develop a program that has a fundamental appeal to those who are “dead in trespasses and sins.” By so doing, you have brought the flesh into the church. You have called back what the church was delivered from.

But there are tragic results for doing such a thing. The Spirit then leaves the church, for it is pledged to lead the believers in crucifying the flesh and mortifying the deeds of the body, refusing to allow it to live (Rom 8:13). If a person or a church refuses to join in this work, the result is spiritual death, “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die” NKJV (Rom 8:13a). It is to our benefit to learn from the example of Nebuchadnezzar.

THE SETTING OF THIS CHAPTER

The events preceding this chapter reveal how God made Himself known to Nebuchadnezzar. This was designed provoke homage toward the God of heaven, and move the king away from the worship

of idols.

- He witnessed four young Hebrews, in the name of their God, excel all of the wise men of Babylon (1:20)
- He heard Daniel tell him a dream he could not remember, then interpret it declaring both the dream and the interpretation of it had come from the God of heaven (2:26)
- The Lord revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that all earthly kingdoms would yield to His own Kingdom, which would destroy all other kingdoms (2:44-)
- He heard the witness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who affirmed they would not bow down to the image he had made (3:16-18).
- He saw with his own eyes a heavenly messenger walking in the midst of a lethal fire with the three Hebrews (3:25).
- He and his counselors saw the young men come out of the fire, and beheld how no hurt was upon them, their hair was not singed, their clothing was unharmed, and the smell of fire was not upon them (3:26-27).

MADE GREAT BY GOD

“ 4:1-9 Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.” Other versions read, “to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth ,” NASB “To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world ,” NIV “to all peoples, nations, and languages that live throughout the earth .” NRSV and “to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world .” NJB

There is not the slightest hint in our text that this was a regional declaration. Rather, it was clearly, according to the Holy Spirit one for all the world with all of its varied divisions: people (races and ethnic groups), nations (political groups), and languages (cultural groups).

The extent of this declaration indicates the remarkable expanse of Nebuchadnezzar’s authority. He was a global ruler in every sense of the word. We should not allow any fleshly jargon, such as “the then known world,” to mitigate the power of this text. Not only is Nebuchadnezzar saying these words,

the Holy Spirit is inspiring them to be written by Daniel. If there was no truth in them, or if they were an exaggeration, the Spirit would have said something like, “For he wist not what to say,” as in Mark 9:6). The Spirit searches everything, even the deep things of God, and expresses them most precisely (1 Cor 2:10-13).

I conclude, therefore, that when the text says “ALL people, nations, and languages, that dwell in the earth,” that is precisely what it means. No valid purpose is served by supposing they mean anything else.

I want to underscore that this remarkable level of influence came from Almighty God. It was not the result of Nebuchadnezzar’s military expertise, technical skills, or leadership qualities. While those things were found in the king, it was not because of any inherent or natural ability he possessed. The word of God is quite clear on this subject. This is an example of God setting up a king.

- “I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto Me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant ; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him” (Jer 27:5-7)
- “For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon ; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also” (Jer 28:14)
- “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand , and hath made thee ruler over them all . . . ” (Dan 2:37-38).
- “O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor : and for the majesty that He gave him , all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down” (Dan 5:18-19).

The remarkable achievements of this monarch were not of his own doing. Rather, they were the result of God giving Nebuchadnezzar “dominion and might and power and glory.” NIV He conquered nations because they had been given to him by God. That is the reason “the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him.” NIV

This circumstance is precisely why Nebuchadnezzar will be judged so harshly. He had received

his kingdom wholly from God, yet would treat it as though he had developed it himself. God would not overlook his insolence.

PEACE BE MULTIPLIED UNTO YOU

“Peace be multiplied unto you.” Other versions read, “May you prosper greatly!” NIB and “Peace and prosperity to you!” NLT

The pronouncement almost sounds Apostolic – but it is not, nor is it intended to confer the same blessing as is frequently stated in the Apostolic writings (ex, 1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2; Jude 1:2). This was an oriental manner of greeting the peoples. This is how David instructed his young men to greet Nabal (1 Sam 25:5-6), who was “churlish and evil in his doings” (1 Sam 25:3). When Jesus sent out the seventy, He also told them to greet the house they entered by saying, “Peace be to this house.” If then it was, indeed, a peaceable house, the peace would remain upon it (Luke 10:5-6). To this very day, the Jews still greet one another in this manner – “Shallom.”

The idea Nebuchadnezzar intended to convey was his desire for people to be preserved from troubling influences and various forms of disturbance. It was confined to external matters and appearance, for that was the extend of his understanding. By saying “multiplied,” he conveyed the thought that he wanted favorable conditions to abound. The desire for their outward happiness and prosperity is expressed in this proclamation.

In my opinion, Nebuchadnezzar was feeling good, greatly satisfied with what he thought were his own achievements. He did not speak in this manner out of a fervent desire for the betterment of the people, but because of his own present peace and tranquility.

Apostolic salutations were of another order. This was because they had greater insight due to the removal of sin and the consequent enthronement of the Lord Jesus Christ. These marvelous salutations were often pronounced when the servants of the Lord were under great duress, suffering for righteousness sake (Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 2 Tim 1:6; Phile 1:3). In Christ, such a salutation is lifted to a high level, including the heart, mind, and conscience. It is true, the language is similar to that of the king, yet carries a more profound meaning.

SHOW THE SIGNS AND WONDERS

“ 2 I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me.” Other versions read, “It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me,” NASB “It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me,” NIV “The signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me I am pleased to recount,” NRSV and “I want you all to know about the miraculous signs and wonders the Most High God has performed for me.” NLT

CHAPTER STANDS AS A WHOLE

The fourth chapter stands as a whole. That is, Nebuchadnezzar is himself bearing witness to how the Lord humbled him. He is personally recounting the dream he had, Daniel’s interpretation of it, and his personal experience of it. He shares with the entire world the devastating humiliation he had to experience before he learned something of the greatness and sovereignty of the God of heaven.

An Inspired Account

This is Daniel’s inspired account of the proclamation of king Nebuchadnezzar to the world. The language employed by the king is sanctioned by the Spirit, and thus included in the text. It revealed the working and nature of God, and thus the Lord must have moved him to declare these things. Nebuchadnezzar saw some very valid aspects of Almighty God, and could not keep it quiet. God moved him to declare these things throughout a heathen empire, while His own people were being chastened in the Babylonian captivity! Even in those days, God did not leave Himself “without witness” (Acts 14:17).

There have been periods of human history during which precious few people were speaking out the Word of the Lord. Yet, the Lord saw to it that His good Word and promises were declared by someone. During the Dark Ages, when a thick spiritual haze covered the masses, God raised up poets and musicians who kept the truth alive. In our text, the truth about God is rifled throughout the world by a heathen king! That is how great God is!

I THOUGHT IT GOOD

“I thought it good . . .” The heart of the king has been so affected that he was pleased to give an account of God’s dealings with him – even though most of them were very humiliating. We will witness the powerful effects of humility – how it impacts upon the whole attitude of the individual.

One of the sure signs God is dealing with an individual is the breaking down of a reluctance to testify. While it is not my purpose to bind rules upon the people of God, it is necessary to declare the powerful impact of Divine working upon the souls of men. This is particularly true when the speaking follows great trials. A few examples will suffice to show this is not infrequently the case.

- Job speaks after his trials. “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.” (Job 40:4-5)

- Jacob speaks after his trials. “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.” (Genesis 32:10)
- Joseph speaks after his trials. “And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.” (Genesis 45:7-8)
- David speaks after his trials. “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.” (Psalms 119:67)
- Paul speaks after his trials. “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

The response of people to their trials and rebukes is a critical matter with God. As it is written, “He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, Will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Prov 29:1). On one occasion God said of His own people Israel, “In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion” (Jer 2:30). Later Jeremiah confessed, “. . . Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return” (Jer 5:3).

How different were the responses of David when rebuked by Nathan (2 Sam 12:7-14), Hezekiah when rebuked by Micah (Jer 26:18-19), Ahab when rebuked by Elijah (1 Kgs 21:17-29), Manasseh when carried away captive (2 Chron 33:12-13), the Ninevites under the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3:5-9), Peter when he denied Jesus (Matt 26:73), and Saul of Tarsus when confronting Jesus (Acts 9:6-9).

Our response to correction is important, and we dare not treat it as though it was inconsequential. We have a new breed of religion these days that is driven by psychological principles, and repentance is not a prominent part of it. There are too many explanations being offered for deviate conduct and unacceptable manners, and too little sensitivity to the chastening of the Lord.

When Nebuchadnezzar published a decree that declared it seemed “good” to him to make known how God had been dealing with him, he was responding favorably to the strong hand of God.

I have mentioned that Nebuchadnezzar mirrors the nature of the flesh. He did not speak of God in this manner because of the truth he had heard. Rather, it was because of the frustration and

impotence he had experienced. There are times when flesh can be humbled in this manner, but it is generally short-lived. An example of this is found in the repentance of Nineveh. They did, indeed, repent “at the preaching Jonah” (Matt 12:41). Yet, in the process of time, they lapsed back into iniquity once again, and were thus later “laid waste” and made “desolate” (Nahum 3:7; Zeph 2:13).

An even more vivid depiction of this principle is seen in backsliding Israel. God poured blessings upon her, chastened her, and hewed her by the Prophets (Isa 5:4; Jer 31:18; Hos 6:5). Yet He said of her, “Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return” (Jer 8:5). The up and down experiences of Israel are clearly seen in the concise book of Judges. Their religion was wholly inconsistent, even though it had been revealed from heaven, and given to them by God. However, as with Nebuchadnezzar, it did not get past the flesh, or the natural part of their being or persons. It was only on the surface, not in the heart.

Make no mistake about this, repentance is good, and testifying is comely. We can take nothing from that. My point is that neither can be sustained by the flesh. Only those who have been regenerated, becoming a “new creation” in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17) , can be consistent in their response to God. This circumstance accounts for much of the erratic behavior that is found within the church. Such people are more like Nebuchadnezzar than Christ. Their religion is by fits and starts, but has no consistency to it. It is one thing for the king of Babylon to be like this. It is quite another for such a condition to be found in this “day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2), when the “sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2) has risen to His zenith, and the abundance of grace is available to anyone who desires it.

SHOWING THE SIGNS AND WONDERS

“ . . . to show the signs and wonders . . . ” Nearly every version of Scripture uses these words, “signs and wonders.” Two modern translations read, “miraculous signs and wonders,” NIB and NLT

Both words denote the miraculous working of God. That is, things that were done apart from natural causes. These are works that are transcendent to nature. They can only be done by God, and they cannot be duplicated by men. In them, the laws of nature are suspended, having no power to dominate the circumstance. Thus Joshua commanded the sun and moon to stand still (Josh 10:12), Elisha raised the widows son from the dead (1 Kgs 17:21), Peter walked on water (Matt 14:29), and Jesus fed a multitude with five loaves and two fishes (Matt 14:19).

It is not possible for a scientist or analyst to explain precisely how a sign or wonder takes place. They occur outside the realm to which all human knowledge is limited. A miracle cannot be put into a test tube for analyzation and explanation. They can only be accounted for by a Living God, who, according to His own will, often works in contradiction of nature, and in spite of hopeless conditions. These are opportunities for His greatness.

Two Categories

Signs

Nebuchadnezzar refers to “signs” and “wonders.” A “sign” is a miracle that verifies something, confirms something that has been declared, or declares a fact that was not seen before. Thus Jesus spoke of “the sign of the prophet Jonah,” miraculously swallowed by a fish, and expelled again to preach to Nineveh (Matt 12:39). The return of the Lord is also said to be “the sign of the Son of man,” confirming He is precisely who He said He was, and will do exactly what He said He would do (Matt 24:30). Paul wrought certain miracles referred to as “signs of an Apostle,” or confirmations that he was who he said he was – “an Apostle of Christ” (2 Cor 12:12).

The word “sign” speaks of the purpose of the miracle. It is an indicator, or ratification of something greater than itself.

In Nebuchadnezzar’s case, “signs” confirmed the Lord was the “God of Gods and Lord of kings” (Dan 2:47). This was confirmed by the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and his own seven year tenure in the field as a beast.

Wonders

A “wonder” is something that causes those who behold it to marvel or stand in awe. This is seen in the effect of our Lord’s miracles upon His own disciples. “But the men marveled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him” (Mat 8:27). And again, when He cursed the fig tree, “And when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!” (Mat 21:20). When Jesus raised the man sick of palsy, “the multitude saw it, they marveled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men” (Mat 9:8).

The word “wonder” speaks of the effect of the miracle upon those beholding it.

“Signs and wonders” are not different classes of miracles, but different views of them. One is objective – making a point. The other is subjective – catching the attention and awe of the beholder. Thus, when Nebuchadnezzar spoke of “signs and wonders” he was speaking of the mighty works of God that brought something home to his heart. He was also speaking of those same works as transcendent to anything he had ever seen before, inspiring his awe.

Cannot Convert the Soul

“Signs and wonders” do not convert the soul. Nor, indeed, do they of themselves cause people to turn to the Lord. For example, the Lord “showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household” (Deu 6:22). They proved to be the means God used to harden Pharaoh’s heart. When Jesus wrought wonderful works, they had no impact upon many. Thus it is written, “But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him” (John 12:37).

The Psalmist spoke of God's wonders as actually causing people to marvel, then run away . "For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marveled; they were troubled, and hasted away" (Psa 48:5). On another occasion, Jesus said His great works had moved people to hate Him and His Father. "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15:24).

While Nebuchadnezzar did not rise to the heights of those who walk and live by faith, he certainly did not sink to the depths of Pharaoh, or those who hated Jesus and God because of Christ's mighty works.

Differing Effects

There are differing effects of "signs and wonders" upon those who see them. Everyone does not respond in the same way. On one occasion, shortly before the night He was betrayed, Jesus confessed His soul was troubled. On that occasion He reasoned, "what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). His great heart moved Him to then cry out, "Father, glorify Thy name."

Immediately, as though eager to honor His Son, God spoke from heaven. "Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." It was an audible voice – both a sign and a wonder. How would the people respond to it?

There were three differing reactions to the voice of the Lord. "The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered : others said, An angel spake to him . Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes " (John 12:28-30). The first group were utterly obtuse like Pharaoh. To them, it was merely a natural occurrence – "it thundered." Others, in the category of Nebuchadnezzar knew this was not a natural phenomenon, but a heavenly one. They concluded an angel had spoken to Him. Jesus, however, perceived the fulness of the event. He told the people the voice was not for His benefit, but for theirs – even though many did not see it.

Have A Right Perspective

Do not imagine that a great outbreak of "signs and wonders" would result in conquering wayward souls. Yet, you must not become a religious skeptic either, as though they had no place, and God has altogether ceased such activity. There had not been "signs and wonders" for a long time when Daniel and his colleagues found themselves captives in Babylon. However, that did not mean they were no longer possible, as our text affirms. The same was true in the time of Gideon (Judges 6:3).

In fact, there have been very few times in the history of the world when there was a sustained

period of regular miracles – “signs and wonders.” If some of our modern theologians had been living during those times when “signs and wonders” were not apparent, they probably would have reasoned that God had stopped doing such things. Their view is so utterly absurd, that no Prophet would be summoned to rebuke them. Rather, Nebuchadnezzar would probably be called to bear witness to their religious folly – just as he is doing in our text.

It is a noble soul that can still believe God “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,” even though there may be little apparent evidence of it around us (Eph 3:20). I urge you to “have faith in God” (Mk 11:22). God’s hand “is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy that is cannot hear” (Isa 59:1). He still honors faith, and can intervene in the affairs of men in the behalf of His children. He has never said a time would come when things “impossible” for men would not be “possible” with Him (Mk 10:27). And, who is the theologian who wishes to affirm things possible for God are things He refuses to do? The affirmation of Divine possibility is intended to bring hope to believers.

Why Say These Things?

This is not a mere hobby-horse. I know from experience of the debilitating effects of faulty theology. Those who have been convinced “the days of miracles is past” cannot read Daniel with much profit – for it is a book of Divine intervention. The Scriptural postulate is that there is possibility with God. Let no person rob the saints of God of that perception! With Him, all things are possible! This is even associated with individuals being saved, or entering into the Kingdom (Matt 19:25-26).

Many of God’s people are in circumstances that are too challenging for men. If God does not come to their aid, they have no hope at all. Who is the person who will come as a thief to rob them of the persuasion God is able to work in their behalf?

Let me be clear about those who would take this persuasion from believers – any who would affirm God no longer intrudes into the affairs of men in supernatural ways. There is no place for such a person in the Kingdom of God! Their influence is like a morose cloud descending upon tender hearts. Their view is based upon human interpretation, but Divine affirmation. God always leaves the believer with the idea He will help, deliver, and direct. If people cannot receive that from us, they will surely receive it from Nebuchadnezzar on the day of judgment.

WROUGHT TOWARD ME

“ . . . that the high God hath wrought toward me.” Other versions read, “has worked for me,” NKJV “has done for me,” NASB “has performed for me,” NIV

The greater weight of testimony comes when it is personal. It is one thing to declare what God has done for someone else. That is not bad, but there comes a time when it is not the best.

Nebuchadnezzar might well have spoken about the supernatural wisdom and knowledge he had seen in the four children of Judah (Dan 1:20). He could have proclaimed the revealed wisdom of Daniel when he told him his first dream and the interpretation of it (Dan 2:43). He might even have proclaimed how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from a fiery furnace to which he himself had consigned them (Dan 3:24-27).

Instead, Nebuchadnezzar declares what the Lord had done “toward” him – how he had worked with him in a most remarkable way. He is speaking in particular about the event included in his proclamation (vs 29-37). Like the former Gadarene demoniac, he will declare “how great things the Lord had done” unto him (Mark 5:19). He will do like Mary, the mother of our Lord, who said, “For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name” (Luke 1:49). Like Lot he will confess, “Thou hast magnified Thy mercy, which Thou hast showed unto me in saving my life” (Gen 19:19).

May no child of God be upstaged by Nebuchadnezzar! If the Lord has done great things toward you, tell it! Speak it out, and do so without fear. Let it “be good” to you to speak of the hand of the Lord being upon you. Peruse your life, and see what He has done for you. It will fire your heart and strengthen your speech. Search and see! See and speak!

PRECISE WORDS BUT LIMITED INSIGHT

“ 3 How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.” In my judgment, these words could not have been said without Divine influence. There is no form of human wisdom or logic that can move men to speak in this manner. Human affection is not strong enough to cause such marvelous speech to erupt from the mouth and pen! In a sense, it is like the stones crying out (Lk 19:40).

HOW GREAT ARE HIS SIGNS

“How great are His signs! Every major versions reads exactly the same. In all of the Bible, Nebuchadnezzar is the only one quoted as saying these words. Yet, truer words could not have been spoken. Moses said God “showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes” (Deu 6:22). Joshua referred to the “great signs” God did when delivering the people from Egypt (Josh 24:17). So, this is certainly not a strange concept.

Signs that are “great” are domineering signs – signs that dwarf everything else and induce fear in the beholders. They are signs that cannot be subdued, overlooked, or treated as though they did not occur. By saying “ HOW great,” the king accents they extended beyond any human comprehension, causing the spirit of God’s enemies to wither. Such signs move far beyond being mere impressions, and are thus unlike the “great signs” wrought by “false Christ’s and false prophets” (Matt 24:24). The “great signs” wrought by God are not an end of themselves, but testify to His greatness. They confirm He is, indeed, the “God of gods and Lord of kings.”

HOW MIGHTY ARE HIS WONDERS

“ . . . and how mighty are His wonders!” Again, every major translation reads the same. “Mighty” wonders are overpowering wonders, or overriding displays of Divine authority. They occur when Divine power meets the power of nature, men, or the devil and his hosts, and simply rolls over them. Mighty wonders would include the Red Sea parting (Ex 15:8), the sun and moon standing still (John 10:12), the accompanying tempests at Sinai (Heb 12:18), the slaying of 185,000 Syrian hosts (2 Kgs 19:35), the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan 3:27), and the triumphant resurrection of Christ (Rom 1:4).

In all of these instances, there were opposing forces that would have prohibited the wonder – but they could not. God’s wonders are “mighty,” and no opposing force can hinder or neutralize them! If God will work in your behalf, there is no power in heaven, earth, or under the earth that can diminish that work one whit.

Nebuchadnezzar sensed this through his own humiliating experience, and insisted that the whole world know about it. Furthermore, this was not difficult for him to do because he was the ruler of the world. He simply proclaimed it, and the word went forth. I conclude, therefore, that God not only raised Nebuchadnezzar up to chasten Israel, but to get His glorious name among the nations while His own people were in a captive state. Here is an example of the truth declared in Revelation 12:16: “And the earth helped the woman.”

Child of God, your Lord’s “great signs” and “mighty wonders,” are part of the Divine arsenal that God employs in your behalf. None of your enemies are able to contend with them or cause them to be powerless. Look at your own situation. If you are facing grief, sorrow, weakness, or some other form of trial, ponder what can happen if the Lord raises His arm, looks at you with His eye, or turns His ear toward you.

Should He choose to work in your behalf, the prison doors you are experiencing can be opened like those in Philippi were for Paul and Silas (Acts 16:26). If your soul is famished and you sense a spiritual famine all around you, God can feed you with the birds of the air, like He did Elijah (1 Kgs 17:4-6). The very Divine power that subdued Nebuchadnezzar will sustain you. Do not ignore what He can do. Bring His “great signs” and “mighty wonders” into the scenario! Your difficulties will look different when you view them in faith.

AN EVERLASTING KINGDOM

“ . . . His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom . . . ” When Daniel explained Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great multi-metaled image, he spoke of God setting up a kingdom. Of that kingdom he said, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed : and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all

these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever ” (Dan 2:44). Now the king sees this more clearly, and proclaims it to “all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth.”

The thought has occurred to me that it would be wonderful to have an influential person of our time make such a declaration. This compromising era does not often hear such proclamations, even though, under the administration of Jesus, much more is now known of this kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar had to be brought low before he could declare this. We have been “raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places.” Such affirmations ought to be common among those who are in Christ Jesus.

Several centuries before Nebuchadnezzar, David confessed with insight, “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom , and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations” (Psa 145:13) – almost exactly what the king of Babylon said. Several centuries after Nebuchadnezzar, Peter wrote, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:11). Isaiah also spoke of this aspect of God’s kingdom, referring to it under the administration of the Lord Jesus. “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end , upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever . The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa 9:7).

The Kingdom of God is not simply another kingdom among many others. It is the dominant one, with all others subordinate to it. The Babylonian kingdom is a case in point. Although a world power, God was governing even that mighty empire, using it for His own glory. He used that kingdom to bring His servants into prominence. Through it they received authority, and exercised great influence.

Those who imagine God’s Kingdom is slated to come at some future time, remaining inactive until that time, are in great error. The revelation of the Kingdom is not to be equated with the Kingdom itself. Right now, in Christ, we have “received” this Kingdom, and have been “translated” into it (Heb 12:28; Col 1:13). God and everything associated with Him do not begin at the point they are revealed, and it is damaging to the soul to think in such as though that was true. The Word was manifested and dwelt among us, but He did not begin to be at that time (John 1:1,14), but was manifested. Revelation has to do with confirmation, not beginnings.

Another day has been scheduled on the Divine agenda when the Father is going to unveil, or manifest, the Son. He will show Him to be “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim 6:15). That is not when He will begin to be these things, but when He will be revealed in that capacity.

So it is with the Kingdom of God. Because it is an “everlasting kingdom,” it cannot be circumscribed by time and circumstance. Nebuchadnezzar sensed this. He was able to correlate what had occurred to Him with the Kingdom of God – with the Sovereign and unquestionable rule of Almighty God.

In this regard, the Babylonian heathen surpasses many professing Christians . Many among confessed believers appear unable to relate their own lives to the government of God. They look at their troubles and ask if God really cares. After some Divine tutelage, Nebuchadnezzar saw his grief as the interposition of God. Adversity trickles into the lives of many, and they become angry with God. Nebuchadnezzar spoke of God's great signs and mighty wonders toward him. Through him we can learn of the possibilities of praise. Those possibilities are greatly increased in Christ Jesus, so that no justified person should come behind the Chaldean king.

DOMINION FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

“ . . . and His dominion is from generation to generation .” The NIV read, “ endures from generation to generation.” Other versions read, “His rule through all generations,” NLT “His power to all generations,” SEPTUAGINT “His rule goes on from generation to generation.” BBE

The word “dominion” means sovereignty – authority that is implemented without any effective resistance. The “dominion” of God is another view of His Kingdom. The word “Kingdom” speaks of the purpose of God and its penetration into all the world. It is a purpose that is not only determined, but is carried out. God's “dominion” speaks His of power to implement His will under any and all circumstances.

The dominion of God is not interrupted, much less terminated, or supplanted by some other kingdom. There has never been a generation in which God did not dominate. There has been no time in which His dominion, or area of rule, shrank or became smaller. This was demonstrated in the Garden, when sin entered. Regardless of their will and wisdom, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden. The Lord had dominion! The same type of thing happened in the days of Noah. The world lifted up its heel against God, and His dominion prevailed as He cleansed the earth of moral defilement. His dominion was also seen in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the overthrow of Egypt and the nations that dwelt in Canaan.

Anytime God raises His hand to work, or determines to do a thing, His dominion is made known. If He determines that Abraham will have a son through Sarah, after his body is “as good as dead,” and Sarah is hopelessly barren, it will take place. His dominion is from generation to generation! If He decides to deliver Israel from Egypt after 430 years of bondage, they will come out in a single night, with not so much as a hoof left behind. His dominion is from generation to generation!

Because God's dominion proceeds uninterrupted and unmitigated from generation to generation, He declares: “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand” (Isa 14:24). And again, “I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it” (Isa 46:11). How vividly the Psalmist declared this truth. “The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations” (Psa 33:10-11).

His dominion is from generation to generation!

Even though, according to appearance, it may have looked like God's dominion was interrupted when Jerusalem was conquered and devastated by Nebuchadnezzar, that was not the case at all. Regardless of seemingly impossible circumstances, the reign of Almighty God extends from one generation to another – even from Solomon to Nebuchadnezzar, and from Nebuchadnezzar until this very day. He has not changed. His purpose has not changed. His dominion over all is still in place – even at this very hour.

Not Just the Words of Nebuchadnezzar

These are not merely the words of Nebuchadnezzar. They came from him, and no doubt registered to a measurable degree upon his spirit, but they did not originate with him. The Holy Spirit did not include them in Scripture to promote Nebuchadnezzar, but to assure the hearts of the saints of the power of the living God.

God has opened the mouths of wayward people to speak His truth, therefore displaying His dominion.

- “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” (Num 23:19) – spoken by Balaam.
- “I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked” (Exo 9:27) – spoken by Pharaoh.
- “Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him” (Mat 27:19) – spoken by Pilate's wife of Jesus.
- “Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him” (John 19:4) – spoken by Pilate of Jesus.
- “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Mat 27:4) – spoken by Judas of Jesus.

It is the manner of the Spirit to include truth in Scripture, even when it is spoken by those who are not themselves reconciled to God or serving Him. In such cases, we are not to assume the cold and calculating human intellect brought these individuals to speak in such a manner. They certainly were not mere robots, but God was speaking through them – and that for our benefit.

FLAWED THEOLOGIES

The words spoken by Nebuchadnezzar – “His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation” – expose a bit of flawed theology that is found among some. The particular view of which I speak uses the term “prophetic time clock.” Briefly stated, the view postulates that God’s purpose for the Jews ran amuck, causing Him to temporarily switch to another plan. This differing plan is called “the church age,” and refers to His working within the Gentile church until He finally resumes His original purpose. Realizing this does not easily fit into the Scriptures, the proponents of this view say that God’s “prophetic time clock” was temporarily stopped – it ceased to tick, so to speak. Once certain end-time prophecies are fulfilled, that clock will start ticking again.

This view sharply conflicts with God’s kingdom being “everlasting,” and His “dominion” extending from one generation to another. It presumes the effective thwarting of the purpose of God – at least for a time. If that is possible, there is a generation, perhaps multiple generations, to which God’s dominion did not extend. We would, then, have an “everlasting kingdom” being interrupted, and a purposed dominion put on hold. These things simply cannot be.

Why Do Men Do This?

The sensitive heart wonders why men concoct such views, superimposing them upon the Word of God itself. It is because they have adopted a theological view that is actually external to the Scriptures themselves. It is a finely tuned religious system with many intricacies of thought, all of which are highly appealing to the flesh. The Bible is then read with this view in mind. The position is placed like a template upon the text of Scripture. The person who has received the position thus reads around texts that clearly conflict with the view, never really seeing them. Other texts, because of the template, become distorted, making them appear as though they support the flawed view. Such powerful delusion thus comes upon the soul that the individual cannot even “acknowledge the truth” (2 Tim 2:25).

Fortunately, Nebuchadnezzar was not exposed to these fanciful human theologies. Being moved to some degree by God, he got the right message, and thus articulated a proper view of Almighty God. I do not doubt that he will rise in the day of judgment like the Queen of Sheba and the men of Nineveh (Matt 12:421-42), to testify against those who have concluded things about God and His purpose that simply cannot be supported by His Word. Their record should prepare us for the day of judgment.

AT REST AND FLOURISHING, YET DISRUPTED

“ 4 I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: 5 I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.” To this point, everything in the proclamation has been an introduction. Nebuchadnezzar has stated the bottom

line first – the summation of the manner. Now he will declare what has brought him to the stated conclusions.

A Divine Manner Seen

In this, the Divine manner can again be seen. In God's Kingdom, learning is different than it is in the world. The world learns from the bottom up. By that, I mean elementary things are first taught, then, progressively, more difficult things are learned. An example would be learning the ABC's, then certain uncomplicated words, then sentences, then whole thoughts . . . etc. That is the manner of the world, and does apply to things pertaining to the world.

However, with God learning is from the top down. First the summary things, then the details. This is the principle upon which all of the promises of God are based. For example, in the Garden God promised, "And I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed (Jesus) ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel" (Gen 3:15). There was a noticeable absence of details, to be revealed later. The Seed Himself was not identified, nor when He would come into the world, or where He would be born. The woman who would give birth to Him was not identified. Yet, when you read the Scriptures with this promise in mind, a great deal of understanding is found.

The preaching of the Gospel is according to the same principle. In its summation the Gospel is said to be this: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you . . . how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:1-4). Why Jesus died is not affirmed in this summation. Other critical matters are omitted, such as justification (Rom 5:9), reconciliation Col 1:21), making peace with God (Col 1:20), putting away sin (Heb 9:26), destroying the devil (Heb 2:14), and plundering principalities and powers (Col 2:15). Now, however, when the details are read with this summation in mind, understanding becomes fruitful.

Thus, speaking through Nebuchadnezzar the heathen, God informs the world first of Himself. Nebuchadnezzar will relate things GOD HAS DONE – not things He merely allowed to happen. This is in perfect keeping with God's manner to reveal Himself in "signs" and "wonders" that cannot be produced through nature. His kingdom is everlasting, and His dominion extends uninterrupted from generation to generation. The events that follow are an example of this.

AT REST IN MINE HOUSE

"I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house . . ." Other versions read, "at ease in my house," NASB "at home in my palace," NIV "living at ease in my home," NRSV "thriving in my house," SEPTUAGINT and "living comfortably in my house." NJB

When This Occurred

This occurred during the close of Nebuchadnezzar's ministry. He reigned from forty-three to forty-five years. One year after this dream, what it portrayed came to pass (verse 29). The judgment covered lasted seven years (verse 32). We do not know how long he lived after this event, but is generally agreed that it was a year or two. That means this dream took place around the thirty-fifth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

We know that Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem in the ninth year of his reign (2 Kgs 25:1). Including the three years of preparation Daniel and his friends went through (1:3), and the period of time covered by the interpretation of the king's dream of the great image, and the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, it is possible this case took place as many as ten or more years after the events of chapter three.

At Ease In My House

This expression means everything was peaceful – not merely in the house, but in the kingdom. There were no apparent adversaries, and things were in a state of tranquility and safety. The wars had ceased, and, as we will see, he had built a magnificent capital. Like the man whose crops had yielded abundantly, he could say, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19). It was highly unlikely that anything could now disturb the king. His military exploits had been successful, as well as his construction projects. Surely a long period of rest could now be enjoyed – at least, that is what Nebuchadnezzar thought.

FLOURISHING IN MY PALACE

“ . . . I Nebuchadnezzar was . . . flourishing in my palace . . . ” Not only was there a peaceful environment, prosperity was uninhibited: good health, an untroubled mind, abounding in substance, indulging all appetites without any need of restraint. Everything was going his way!

While this is an enviable state to the flesh, however, it is not so from the heavenly perspective. David delivered a stirring depiction of such prosperous souls. “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity” (Psa 10:3-6). We know from the events of this chapter that this is precisely the frame of the king's mind and soul. He was not seeking after God. God was not in his thoughts, even though the Lord had dealt sufficiently with him that such thoughts should have been very dominant. The judgments of God were “out of sight,” not in the remotest consideration of the king. He had forgotten about the devouring kingdom of God had shown to him in a dream. He had also apparently gotten over what he witnessed in and out of the burning fiery furnace. God had dealt with him extensively on two separate occasions, but he was not recalling them now.

If ever there was a lethargic soul, here is one. His soul was not tuned into heaven, and his mind

was not occupied with any considerations of or quest for the Living God. Can God get the attention of such a person? If His kingdom is an everlasting one He can! If His dominion is from generation to generation He can! This may appear to be a challenging circumstance for men, but it is not for God.

An Application

You must be able to apply this to the circumstances of your own life. There may be people you know whose hearts and minds are anything but occupied with God. They may be at ease, and even flourishing, with no intention of seeking after the Lord, or even thinking upon His name. But God can get their attention.

A DREAM THAT CAUSED FEAR

“ . . . I saw a dream which made me afraid . . . ” Other versions read, “I had a dream and it made me fearful,” NASB “I saw a dream which frightened me,” NRSV “I saw a dream which was a cause of great fear to me,” BBE “ I saw a vision, and it terrified me,” SEPTUAGINT

Suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar’s ease and prosperity is interrupted. There is an intrusion into his thoughts, and it came from heaven! Because the king was unfamiliar with God, and consequently could not hold intelligent dialog with Him, he receives a dream – something he can behold. As we will see, it is an extended dream – like the first one he received from God (chapter 2). This was the Sovereign God at work, and He could not be withheld from that work – not by Satan, or by the will of the king.

This is not the first time God worked in this manner.

- God arrested the attention of Abimelech, heathen king of Gerah, with a dream (Gen 20:3).
- The Lord came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, taking hold of his mind (Gen 31:24).
- An Egyptian baker and butler were brought to their senses with God-sent dreams (Gen 40:8-23).
- The Pharaoh during Joseph’s tenure in Egypt had two dreams from the Lord that troubled him (Gen 41:1-36).
- One of the Midianites to be overthrown by Gideon’s hosts received a troubling dream (Judges 7:13).
- The tranquility of Pilate’s wife was interrupted by a unsettling dream (Matt 27:19).

Do not think for one moment that the mighty God of heaven cannot arrest the mind of one who is far from Him!

TROUBLING VISIONS

“ . . . and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.” Other versions read, “these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me,” NASB “the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me,” NIV and “the visions that passed through my head tormented me.” NJB

These were, then, reoccurring visions, just like his first dream. They appeared to intensify rather than diminish in their effects. The king could not get away from the thoughts being sent into his mind in the form of a dream and visions. It is as though whenever he went to sleep, a flood of overriding dreams and thoughts rushed into his mind and head. They came from God, and there was no way to stop them.

One minute Nebuchadnezzar was “at ease” in his house. The next, his thoughts were taken over by the Lord, and his head was dominated by visions. This was not an act of his will. Rather, it was an act of God’s will.

When it comes to this dream, these thoughts, and these visions, a dream analyst will be utterly useless. A psychiatrist would also be as impotent as the Babylonian wise men in this matter. These thoughts did not originate with Nebuchadnezzar. In no way can they be correlated with normal human experience. These were thoughts from God, and they were troubling to the king.

Again, I want to emphasize the comfort this ministers to the hearts of those who suffer for righteousness’ sake, or are socially dominated by godless men. Those who witness for the Lord may appear unable to get through to those they address. But they must not become discouraged, or think their words lack power because of their natural inabilities. There are two matters to consider. First, the Holy Spirit works in concert with the Word, and the testimony of those who have passed from death unto life (Heb 4:12; Rev 12:11). Second, the Lord has unfettered access to the minds of men, and can work with them as He wills. This is never to be viewed as a reason to move away from declaring to and reasoning with men. It does, however, give us good reason to hope, and to know our labors are not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor 15:58). God can trouble people in their sleep! He can arrest their attention with clear and lucid thoughts, and dreams or visions that dominate their soul. Our text is an example of this fact – and not the only one, at that.

ANOTHER DECREE

“ 6 Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.”

As in the case of his first dream (“dreams,” 2:1,2), this was apparently a recurring dream (i.e., “thoughts” and “visions”, verse5). How long these “thoughts” and “visions” troubled the king, we do not know. This time, as the text will later affirm, the dream itself was known to the king, and he could describe it in detail. However, although sensing it bore an important message, he was unable to unravel or interpret it. Therefore, in the process of time, he sought help.

BRING IN ALL THE WISE MEN

“Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream.” The king seems to have learned nothing from his previous experience. Instead of recalling the Divinely-bestowed ability of Daniel to interpret dreams, he did what he had always done before – call for the “the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers” (2:2). They had proved inferior to Daniel and his companions earlier (1:20). They were powerless to reveal his first dream and interpretation (2:2-11). He had even issued a decree previously to kill all of these men (2:12). Daniel had previously reminded him of their utter worthlessness (2:27). He had declared “there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets” – particularly the ones Nebuchadnezzar had (2:28). In spite of all of this, he first called for these very men again, ignoring both the God of heaven and His prophet Daniel. Why?

Flesh Begets Flesh

Jesus put it this way: “That which is born of flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). The flesh gravitates to the flesh, seeking help from it, and relying upon its resources. Regardless of the abundance of revelations given to it by God, its first recourse is never God. That is its nature, and it is unchangeable. This is involved in the expression, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13:23).

“Flesh,” or “the natural man” (1 Cor 2:14) cannot produce a spiritual thought, or willingly resort to God in the time of need. Any valid thought found in the mind of a carnal man, has been put there by God, just as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar. Any spiritually profitable word emitting from the flesh has also been produced by God, as in the case before us.

Recognition, But Not Retention

This does not mean there is no element of recognition in such people. Nebuchadnezzar recognized

Daniel's wisdom. He saw the truth of his interpretation of the great image. He acknowledged God in the matter of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's deliverance from the furnace. The point is he, like all flesh, could not retain the memories of God's dealings. In this case, the flesh is like a broken cistern that can hold no water (Jer 2:13).

The Case of Israel

We have an even more vivid portrayal of this fact in the nation of Israel. Even though they repeatedly experienced the first-hand deliverance of God, garnered miraculous supplies from Him, and saw manifestations of His Person, yet they "forgot the Lord their God" (Judges 3:7). They even "kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in His law; and forgot His works, and His wonders that He had showed them" (Psa 78:10-11). Their hearts were bent away from God, even though He had dealt so favorably with them – and they were powerless to change them.

Moses once challenged them, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked" (Deu 10:16). They could not do it, so he promised, "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live" (Deu 30:6).

Ezekiel also challenged Israel, "make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek 18:31). He knew they could not do it, so he also promised, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezek 36:27).

Flesh Resorts to Flesh

Thus, Nebuchadnezzar resorted to the Babylonian wise men because that is what he had a mind to do. The revelations of God did not have a lasting impact upon his heart. That is the nature of the flesh. That is why a person "must be born again" (John 3:7), receive a "new heart" and a "new spirit" (Ezek 36:26). That is why the heart must be "circumcised" (Rom 2:29; Col 2:12), and the individual become "a new creation" in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:17).

Much of the seemingly interminable problems modern churches have with their members is owing more to the lack of regeneration than anything else. Like Nebuchadnezzar professing Christians revert again and again to the flesh because there simply is nothing more to them. They need to be born again.

I TOLD THE DREAM

" 7 Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers, and I told the dream before them . . ." The text does not indicate how these men felt about coming to the king. If

they remembered their other encounters with the king, they doubtless would have had some reservations about appearing once again before him.

However, they were “of the flesh” also, and doubtless had likewise forgotten their previous experiences, even as Nebuchadnezzar forgot his.

This time the wise men were given an additional advantage. The king was able to relate his dream to them, point by point. How would their wisdom respond to this advantage? Would they be able to bluff their way through this challenge, or invent some interpretation of their own? Will their wisdom prove adequate for the occasion? Will their education make them sufficient for the requirement of the king? Will Nebuchadnezzar be able to get an answer – any kind of answer – from anyone but a representative of the “God of heaven?”

THEY COULD NOT MAKE IT KNOWN

“ . . . but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.” Remember, this is the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar. He is recounting “the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward” him (v 2). Part of that testimony is what the false prophets could NOT do, as well as what the God of heaven COULD do.

After these men – trained and educated to do what the king required – had heard the dream, all of their wisdom departed from them. Their wisdom was “foolishness with God” (1 Cor 3:19), and thus dried up when faced with interpreting something God had made known. This did not occur by happenstance, God caused it to happen. He saw to it that things were placed before them that they could not resolve. It is God’s manner to do this.

AN APPLICATION

It may be apparent from the experience of Nebuchadnezzar that the world’s wisdom cannot be employed to comprehend what God has revealed. Still, there are numerous people within the church who continue to resort to the wisdom of this world to comprehend the Word of the Lord. The twin displays of worldly wisdom that has become very prominent in Christian circles are hermeneutics and etymology – the science of interpretation and the analyzation of the transmission of the meaning of words from one language to another. These are greatly honored among religious scholars. Yet, neither of them require God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, reconciliation to God, or spiritual understanding. They are purely of man, through man, and to man – yet they are being given a high position in both Christian education and Biblical exposition.

Daniel, who had extensive exposure to Babylon’s form of these approaches will use neither of them. He will not call the king to a consideration of a logical or scientific approach to his dream. Nor, indeed, will he resort to an analysis of any language that may have been involved in the dream. He will rise higher than such things can reach. Honest and good hearts cannot help but consider this

circumstance.

The people of God must learn to give the preeminent place to God in the matter of understanding what He gives and says. It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to seek understanding from the world of the things God has declared and given.

AT THE LAST DANIEL CAME IN

“ 8a But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream . . . ”

AT THE LAST

“But at the last Daniel came in before me . . . ” If ever there was an example of the word, “But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first” (Mat 19:30), this is it. Daniel was “first” by Divine assessment, and “last” by the king’s assessment. In sequence, he was “last,” but in profitability he was “first.”

So far as the sequence is concerned, this is driven more by the Divine agenda than by Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian heart. God first gives the opportunity for the world’s wise men to solve the mystery. When their efforts prove vain, it brings His man forward to display both their foolishness and His wisdom.

This procedure brings glory to God, openly displaying that He is, in fact, “God of gods and Lord of kings.”

- When the Egyptian magicians ran out of power, Moses, the servant of God, kept on working “signs and wonders” (Ex 8:18).
- When Nebuchadnezzar had a fire heated so hot that those who threw those he condemned into that fire were killed, the Lord then delivered His men in and from that very fire (Dan 3:25-28).
- When a storm sapped the strength of seasoned sailors, required that they throw valuable goods and even ship tackling overboard, and “all hope” that they could be saved was “taken away,” then the

Lord raised up Paul to direct everyone to safety (Acts 27:22-44).

When we read the words, “at the last Daniel came in,” we are being introduced to the resolution of the dilemma, not a human effort to resolve it.

Principle Seen In Our Salvation

This very principle is seen in our salvation. Jesus came into this realm “in the end of the world” (Heb 9:26). After men had tried to raise out of the muck of sin for 2,500 years without Law, and 1,500 years with Law, the Savior entered the domain of conflict. After the best of human efforts, and an extended period in which to demonstrate any vestiges of wisdom that remained in them, the Divine assessment was, “There is none righteous, no not one” (Rom 3:10). The world proved to be a mass spiritual graveyard – a valley of dry bones – in which everyone was “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1). Of all the nations it was said, “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). Just as in our text, it was then that the answer came.

Application

It may appear as though this all has very little to do with our text. But we must not allow such simplicity to dominate our minds. The Lord still works in this manner, allowing the world’s wisdom about us to vainly parade before those seeking answers, just like the wise men came before Nebuchadnezzar. They will not succeed in resolving any dilemma that has resulted from sin and alienation from God.

We must not settle for the assessment and conclusion of the worldly wise. Their word must not be considered the final word, any more than the magicians, astrologers, and Chaldeans had the last word in our text. It is time for the people of God to resort FIRST to “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 1:3).

WHOSE NAME WAS BELTESHAZZAR

“ . . . whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god .” There are only two places in all of the Scriptures where Daniel is actually addressed as “Belteshazzar.” Both of them are in this chapter, and are spoken by Nebuchadnezzar (vs 4 and 19). The rest of the time we are told that was his name – Babylonian name – (1:7; 2:26; 4:8,19; 5:12; 10:1). He was so identified during the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Cyrus.

In a sense, this was a very humiliating name, for it meant “Bel’s prince,” or, “whom Bel favors.” MCCLINTOK STRONG CYCLOPIA Some say it meant, “may Bel protect his life.” NELSON All of them have the same basic meaning – it refers to one especially favored and protected by the idol Bel.

Both Isaiah and Jeremiah refer to this false god.

- Isaiah said Bel could not deliver, but himself went into captivity: “Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth, their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle: your carriages were heavy loaden; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity” (Isa 46:1-2).
- Jeremiah referred to much the same thing, saying when Babylon was taken, or conquered, Bel was confounded. “Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded” (Jer 50:2).
- Jeremiah also declares that God would punish Bel, delivering those he had captured, or swallowed up. “And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall” (Jer 51:44).

In his global proclamation, Nebuchadnezzar declares Bel to be “the name of MY god.” With care, therefore, he does NOT say it was the name of Daniel’s God! Even though he gave Daniel this name, it had no impact upon Daniel’s character or religion. Perhaps he thought to contribute to a change in Daniel by giving him such a blasphemous name. But he did not. Only God can so change a man that he is given a new name!

This, then, is another thing Daniel overcame – his Babylonian name. He was in a foreign land, working for a heathen king, and given a heathen name. Yet, he held fast to the Lord, serving only him. This he did without possessing Christ, reconciliation to God, the new birth, or the remission of sins in the sense they are now possessed.

Ought we not to be known for even more faith and consistency than Daniel, seeing we live within “a better covenant established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6)?

THE SPIRIT OF THE HOLY GODS

“ . . . and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods.” Other versions read, “in him is the Spirit of the holy God,” NKJV “In him is a spirit of the holy gods,” NASB “the spirit of the holy gods is with him,” NIV and “who is endowed with a spirit of the holy gods.” NRSV

It is clear from these words that Nebuchadnezzar knew Daniel served a real God – yet, he was not prepared to say He was “the only true God” (John 17:3). He was one of many, in the king’s mind, though He was superior to the others.

It is not clear what he meant by “spirit of the holy gods.” From his perspective, he did not have

the understanding of the “Spirit” that is common among those in Christ Jesus. I will only say that Nebuchadnezzar seems to sense that the abilities Daniel possessed could not have come from man. They were, in every sense, supernatural, and thus he ascribed them to a spirit issuing forth from Deity. That is the very best the king could have meant. The Divine light of that time did not shine bright enough to see as we do in the Lord Jesus. How our hearts must rejoice for the things we have received! Truly, this is a better covenant.

For those who are walking in the light, much more in this event than Nebuchadnezzar saw. The godly virtues and abilities resident in the saints of God are not the products of man. They are not derived by human discipline, ardent study, or a power conferred upon them by their peers. Rather, they are the fruit of the Spirit, who Himself is given to the sons of God (Gal 4:6). We ought to be able to recognize this circumstance more quickly and more thoroughly than the king of Babylon.

An Observation

Nebuchadnezzar was like many of our day, who attempt to mingle the truth of God with the vanities of this world. In his case, he attempted to group the Living God with the dead idols of this world. In our day, regular attempts are made to mingle the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God. It is even more wrong for such attempts to be made in this day of salvation, than it was for Nebuchadnezzar to make them in those spiritually primitive times.

I TOLD THE DREAM

“ . . . and before him I told the dream . . . ” This was different than the last time Daniel was before the king on the matter of a dream. Previously, the king could not recall the dream – not so much as a single point of it or smallest aspect of it. This time, he will tell the dream in meticulous detail, for he has a ready recollection of it.

ADDRESSING DANIEL

“ 8b . . . saying, 9 O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.” The king, who has been noted for flying into rages, speaks gently and respectfully to Daniel. Because the prophet’s ways have pleased the Lord, He has made “even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov 16:7). There has been such a turn of events that the king is now dependent upon Daniel. The Prophet is now the head, and the king is the tail (Deut 28:13). The Lord is certainly able to open great and effective doors to His people, and here He has opened one to his servant, Daniel.

MASTER OF THE MAGICIANS

“ 8b . . . saying, O Belteshazzar, Although the text does not say so, I cannot help but think Daniel shuddered when he was called “Belteshazzar.” His parents had given him the name “Daniel,” which means “God is my Judge.” Some say it means “Judge of God,” or one sent to make pronouncements in the name of the Lord. Imagine being called “Bel’s protected servant.” It would be like Paul being called “the favored of Diana of the Ephesians.” Notwithstanding, the prophet maintains godly composure, for his life does not revolve around himself, but the Lord who has called him to testify to the nations.

“ . . . master of the magicians . . .” Other versions read “chief of the magicians,” NKJV, NASB, NIV “prince of diviners,” DOUAY “master of scribes,” DARBY “master of wonder-workers,” BBE and “master of enchanters,” SEPTUAGINT As you can see, some translations accent the academic part, while others put the emphasis on the dark powers that motivated these men. Both views are correct, for they obtained their knowledge from dark and unlawful sources.

Following the interpretation of his first dream, Nebuchadnezzar had made Daniel “the governor over all the wise men of Babylon” (2:48). Some time after the events of the fourth chapter, Belshazzar’s queen said, “There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers ” (Dan 5:11).

I have often thought how the magicians, astrologers, and soothsayers must have responded to their new “chief.” For them, it no doubt introduced an era of great restriction, for I cannot imagine Daniel allowing them to peddle their delusions among the people, or before the king, as long as he was able to stop it.

But let us look at this from the higher perspective. Promotion comes from the Lord – that is the express revelation of God (Psa 75:6; Dan 4:17). In this case, He gave the kingdoms of the world to a despot, and the magicians, astrologers, and soothsayers into the hands of a holy prophet. There is certainly enough irony in those assignments to confound those who do not have faith in God.

Here again, Daniel is spoken to in language that is reproachful to him, though probably complimentary in the mind of Nebuchadnezzar. It would be like calling David the “chief of the priests of Dagon,” or Josiah the “master over the priests of the high places.” I continue to marvel at the resilience of Daniel. It is no wonder the Lord opened such a great door to him. He was able to conduct himself in such a manner as to bring glory to God.

Thus, two wounding references are made, doubtless intended by the devil to make Daniel act rashly. We will find, however, that Satan's will was utterly frustrated.

THE SPIRIT OF THE HOLY GODS

“ 9c . . . because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee . . . ” As I have already mentioned, mentioned, this was Nebuchadnezzar's way of saying Daniel was somehow linked to Deity. The king saw him as more than a man, invested with power and ability by one of the many gods he recognized. He say men “as trees walking” (Mark 8:24).

NO SECRET TROUBLE THEE

“ 9d . . . and no secret troubleth thee . . . ” Other versions read, “ no mystery baffles you,” NASB “ no mystery is too difficult for you,” NIV and “ no mystery is too great for you to solve.” NLT Even Nebuchadnezzar knew this was not a natural ability. Daniel had previous told him this power was not the result of natural aptitude. “But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living” (Dan 2:30).

All of our exposure to the wise men of Babylon confirms that nearly everything out of the ordinary was most difficult for them, if not impossible. How well the king knew this. But Daniel was not in that category. Notice the consistency of Daniel's ministry. No mystery was too difficult for him. No challenge brought his Divinely bestowed ability to the ground.

There is a consistency to Divine bestowments that make the individual equal to anything associated with their appointed vocation. Paul would say it this way, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil 4:13). For him, that involved not only profound teaching, but learning contentment, knowing how to handle abasement, and how to abound, or handle surplus. God's appointment are accompanied by His enablements.

Daniel had also been a faithful steward. He had handled his captivity to the glory of God. He handled his diet well, not allowing himself to be defiled with the food of the king. He managed his education in a way that honored God, never becoming defiled by the language and literature of the Chaldeans. He handled increased responsibility well also, so that God was honored in all that he did. That is why God was forward to reveal secrets to him. Daniel was trustworthy, a good steward, and faithful to his God.

His experience was much like that of Paul, who said, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful , putting me into the ministry” NKJV (1 Tim 1:12)

TELL ME THE DREAM!

“ 9e . . . tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.” The

NIV reads “Here is my dream; interpret it for me.” Other versions read, “Hear the dream that I saw; tell me its interpretation,” NRSV and “this is the dream I have had; tell me what it means.” NJB

Thus we come to the conclusion of this section, with Nebuchadnezzar ready to relate his dream to Daniel. He expects Daniel to have its meaning, because he has come to know him. He has also been introduced to his God. Although he is not thoroughly familiar with “the God of heaven,” he knows there is no god to compare with Him.

CONCLUSION

All of these things have been the working of the Lord. He is shuffling people here and there, arranging circumstances in order to reveal Himself and how He works. None of these events have just happened. They have been so orchestrated as to cause Daniel to rise above all others, excelling in matters desired by the king.

Even more than that, these are events in which God is making known His own determinations. He is showing them to be irreversible and unable to be impeded by men. This dream will not announce what Nebuchadnezzar ought to do, but what he will do. God will cause the king to do something he does not want to do. He will be forced to do it. It will require a bold and faithful man to declare it, and that is precisely who will do so.

A PRINCIPLE TO BE SEEN

There is a principle to be seen here. God works in such a way as brings glory to Himself, not to men. If men are in any way honored, it is only because they are associated with and working for Him. It is their identity with God that brings any glory at all to them.

God’s purpose, and His alone, drives everything He says and does. This is a grand purpose – one that brings salvation to men in this world, and a reign with Jesus in the world to come. The news of this purpose is called “glad tidings” (Acts 13:32), “Gospel” (Rom 1:18), and “the word of life” (Phil 2:16). It speaks of the absolute destruction of Satan (Heb 2:154), the gathering of everything together in one in Christ (Eph 1:7-10), and making men righteous (Rom 1:17). For those who believe the record God has given of His Son, nothing about this purpose is not to be desired.

In view of this men are to be encouraged to lay hold on what God offers – to apprehend that for which they have been apprehended. There is every reason to be expectant in such a pursuit.

It is also good for all to learn to conduct their lives in such a way that people make a connection between them and the God of heaven. If no such association can be made, ones life has been lived in vain. Furthermore, If God is not glorified because of us, we have nothing to commend us to Him.

The Prophecy of Daniel

THE SECOND DREAM AND ITS INTERPRETATION

Lesson#14

INTRODUCTION

The Lord has dealt bountifully with “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon,” a term ascribed to him fifteen times in Scripture (2 Kgs 24:1,10,11; 25:1,8,22; 2 Chron 36:6; Jer 27:20; 38:3,11,14; 29:3; 34:1; 39:5; Dan 1:1). He had been set up by God as the ruler of the world, with all nations given to him, together with even the beasts of the field . As it is written, “For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also” (Jer 28:14). Nebuchadnezzar had not sought the Lord, and was a worshiper of false gods – yet God raised him to the political throne of the world. He was a heathen, over a heathen nation – yet God made him the most powerful ruler in the world. He had done nothing to deserve such honor, but was even among the

“basest of men” – yet the Most High gave him the kingdoms of the world.

There is a strain of thought extant among theologians that affirms God has no direct dealings with the nations and governments of the world. Thus, it is supposed, they are under no obligation to acknowledge the Lord in any way. These sophists concur among themselves that religion has no place in politics. Recently (June, 2002), a United States court determined the words “under God” could not be included in the pledge of allegiance. They determined this was an infringement upon religious freedom. Although the case is being brought to a higher court, the judgment has produced a wave of responses from various people. Sadly, many of them have come from professed Christians who actually concur with the judgment, declaring that such an acknowledgment is out of order.

The following quotation, in a correspondence received by myself, is representative of such objections. It is the expression of a professing Christian, and active member of a Christian Church in Indiana. “Much of the debate over the pledge of allegiance and ‘God’ being ruled unconstitutional was beset upon the notion of not whether God is unconstitutional, but rather shall we force someone who doesn't believe as we do to accept our idealism. In the Bible, it speaks of choices and Jesus never stated that we should make another believe as we do or we will eventually cause more harm upon God's law than the good that's created through our love for one and another . . . Such idealisms and pretexts that make this nation feel that God Blessed America makes me quite ill. God never blessed America nor will he ever bless our nation. He gives His grace to those who have faith and do what is right even when evil extorts our liberties for so-called ‘safety.’”

While it is not my purpose to turn our attention to the questionable ruling, the above response represents a flawed form of reasoning that is altogether too common among those identified with Christ. Whatever men may think of political liberties, they are never justification for a failure to recognize, and give due honor to, the God of heaven. Our text provides a most excellent example of this principle. Whether men are related to God through Christ or not, they are obligated to honor God. In fact, they will be judged if they do not. That is the postulate of Scripture.

- Prior to the Law, God dealt with the Gentile world because of their lack of response to Him. They were in God's world, which witnessed to “His eternal power and Godhead.” Yet, because they “glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful,” and thus their “foolish heart was darkened” (Rom 1:20-21). They were answerable to God!
- Because the Gentiles misrepresented God by changing His glory into an image like “corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted beasts, and creeping things,” God gave them over to uncleanness (Rom 1:23). They were answerable to God!
- Because the Gentiles “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator,” God gave them over to “vile affections” (Rom 1:25-26). They were answerable to God!

- Because the nations “did not like to retain God in their knowledge,” God gave them over to a “reprobate mind” (Rom 1:28). They were answerable to God!
- Although the world of Noah’s day did not have a written Law from God, yet all of the people except for eight were destroyed for displeasing the Lord by their conduct (Gen 6:3-7). They were answerable to God!
- Sodom and Gomorrah were not Jewish cities, had no covenant with God, or written Law from Him. Yet they “suffered the vengeance of eternal fire” because they committed sins of a most reprehensible nature (Gen 19:23-25; Jude 1:7). They were answerable to God!
- The nations occupying the promised land before Israel had no covenant with God. They had no law from God. Yet because of their conduct, they defiled the land, and God drove them out of it (Lev 18:24-25; Deut 7:1). They were answerable to God!
- Nineveh was not a Jewish city, had no covenant with God, and no written Law from Him. Yet God determined to overthrow the city because “their wickedness” came up before Him. They were spared only when they “believed God,” proclaimed a fast, and determined to change their ways. Although they were Gentiles, God “saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not” (Jonah 3:10). They were answerable to God!
- God held nations who had dealings with the Jews responsible for learning His ways, threatening them with judgment if they did not. “And it shall come to pass, if they will diligently learn the ways of My people, to swear by my name, The LORD liveth; as they taught my people to swear by Baal; then shall they be built in the midst of my people. But if they will not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation, saith the LORD” (Jer 12:16-17). They were answerable to God!
- God spoke of non-Jewish nations that He determined to build and plant. If they did evil in His sight, He would withhold good from them. “And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them” (Jer 18:9-10). They were answerable to God!
- “Herod the king” was a Roman official, ruling over the area occupied by the Jews. He was the ruler who “stretched out his hand to vex certain of the church,” and even “killed James, the brother of John” (Acts 12:1-2). He made a similar attempt to take Peter’s life, but his judgment was overthrown by the Lord (Acts 12:3-19). In spite all of his atrocities against the church, God allowed him to remain as ruler. However, when, on a set occasion, he gave a great oration to the people, they gave a shout saying, “It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.” Because of this, “immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory” (Acts 12:21-23). He was answerable to God!

If it is true that God sets up kings, removes kings, and builds nations, then they are responsible to Him. Politics cannot remove this responsibility, nor can supposed human rights or governmental policies. Men owe God honor and thanksgiving!

There is also an erroneous view among professing Christians that the Law pertained ONLY to the Jews, having no application to any other nation. While it is true as a covenant, it pertained only to Israel, what it said pertained to all the world. As it is written, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom 3:19). If men doubt this is the truth, then the case of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon will clarify the matter for them. They also should learn the truth from the seven nations dispossessed of the land of Canaan. It is intolerable for those who bear the name of Christ to entertain such theological absurdities.

THE RELEVANCE OF THIS

All of this is highly relevant to this text. A heathen king over a heathen empire is going to be judged by God for not responding correctly to the success he enjoyed. This king has no covenant with God, no written Law from Him, and makes no pretense to be serving Him. Yet God will not tolerate his conduct, for "everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48). No person is excluded from this rule, whether king or vassal, nation or person! There is no such thing as a person or nation that is not accountable to God, and obligated to give Him honor! No human law or view of human rights can negate this.

VIEWING HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

Human responsibility must be viewed within the greater light of God and His will. If "all things are of God" (2 Cor 5:18), and "every good gift and every perfect gift is from above" (James 1:17), then all men are obliged to acknowledge that condition. If the Lord "made" "all nations," determining the "times" in which they exist, and the "boundaries of their habitation" (Acts 17:26), they are under obligation to honor Him. All of this is even more applicable in Christ than it was before Him. As it is written, "Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16), but now "commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:17:30). Men had better take this requirement most seriously, for all will give account for their response.

Whatever view men take of political freedom, the most prominent place must be made for these considerations. Further, with them in mind, the text before us will make sense to us, confirming the truth to our hearts.

A GREAT TREE IS SEEN

“ 4:10-28 Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. 11 The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: 12 The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.”

Remember, this is Nebuchadnezzar’s proclamation to the nations of the world. From his viewpoint, he is relating how marvelously God has worked with him. From heaven’s viewpoint, God is declaring His manner among the nations of the world.

The first dream the king received from God had to be told to him by Daniel. He could not remember the dream in its entirety, or a single facet of it. Now, however, he recalls the dream of reference, and recounts it point by point.

A TREE IN THE MIDST OF THE EARTH

“I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great.” First, the words “I saw and behold,” or “I was looking, and behold,” describe the keen interest of the king. This was not a darting dream that came into his mind, then left swiftly. It was rather one that captured Nebuchadnezzar’s attention, even though he did not understand what it meant.

Significant

This tree is an image of significance. It is the focus of attention – “the midst of the earth.” It is far reaching – “the height thereof was great.” This tree was to other trees what the great image of the king’s first dream was to other images. This was not a tree within a forest, but one which stood by itself. It demanded attention, for its height “was great.”

The above picture is a depiction of a sculpture that is in the Hall of Nisroch, an Assyrian god, at Nimroud. BARNES It shows a tree from which Nisroc (on both sides of the tree) is picking fruit. This is the god in whose temple Sennacherib was killed by his own sons. As it is written, “And it came to pass, as he [Sennacherib, 100 years before Nebuchadnezzar] was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword” (2 Kgs 19:37; Isa 37:38). The Lord no doubt chose a symbol that would be of particular significance to Nebuchadnezzar, as he did when He showed the king a great image in his first dream.

THE TREE GREW AND WAS STRONG

“The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth.” Another version reads, “The tree grew large and strong and its top

touched the sky ; it was visible to the ends of the earth .” NIV

Advancing and Dominant

This tree was not merely noted for its appearance. It was large at the first, its height being “great.” But it advanced, growing until it penetrated the very heavens, and could be seen throughout the whole earth. Thus, it was recognized in both heaven and earth.

Here was a tree that was strong and stable. The stormy winds and blast of desert heat had no effect upon it. By reaching into heaven, we note there were no other trees like it, either before or after its dominance. By being seen to the ends of the earth, we see that the eyes of all men were fastened upon this tree. It drew their attention because of its greatness.

ITS LEAVES AND FRUIT

“The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all.” Other versions read, “Its leaves were lovely, Its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all,” NKJV and “Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all.” NIV

Abundant Provisions

This tree was not like the fig tree Jesus cursed, that had “nothing but leaves” (Mark 11:13). It was a productive tree, not only bearing fruit, but “much” fruit that was a source of nourishment “for all.”

There was an attractiveness, or glory, to this tree. It was beautiful to look upon. It was not offensive like a thorn tree, or crude like an olive tree.

Here was a tree that produced an abundance of fruit, not only for those in its immediate vicinity, but around the world. In a sense, it was a global tree.

SHADOW AND REFUGE

“ . . . the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.” Another version reads, “Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.” NIV

Refuge and Care

Behold the utility of this tree. It was not merely impressive to look upon, but had sustaining fruit

upon it. But there was even more to the tree than that. It was also a place of shelter for the beasts of the field from the heat. The birds of the air found a place to dwell, building their nests in its thick boughs. And while the beasts found shelter under it, and the birds within its branches, they were able feast on its rich supply of fruit.

A marvelous tree, indeed. Large, strong, high, increasing, visible, beautiful, fruitful, sheltering, and sustaining. It is no wonder the dream captured the king's attention. God not only spoke to this king, but knew how to do so in such a way as to draw him into a consideration of visions he had in his head while he was upon his bed.

Again, we are introduced to the marvelous access God has to His own offspring. He can arrest their attention!

A WATCHER AND A HOLY ONE

“ 13 I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; 14 He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches.”

As the king considered the visions of his head, peering deeply into them, the peace and tranquility that seemed to surround this tree is suddenly interrupted. It all begins with the mandate of a heavenly personality. In the vision, it becomes apparent that heaven is superior to earth, and those in heaven are vastly superior to those upon the earth.

A WATCHER FROM HEAVEN

“I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven.” Other versions read, “an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven,” NASB “a messenger [watchman] , a holy one, coming down from heaven,” NIV “there was a holy watcher, coming down from heaven,” NRSV and “a sifter, even a holy one, from the heavens is coming down.” YLT

What Is A “Watcher?”

A “watcher” is not a mere spectator. The emphasis here is being a guardian, or one having the care of the tree. This is no doubt an angel – but not merely an angel. This angel is a custodian of the

tree, like Michael the archangel is a keeper of Israel (Dan 10:21; 12:1).

A Holy One

This is the same messenger called a “watcher.” Whatever this “watcher” is about to say will be just and right, for he is a “holy one.” Ordinarily, this term is applied to God Himself, the “Holy One.” It is thus used forty-eight times in Scripture (ex, 2 Kgs 19:22; Job 6:10; Psa 71:22; Isa 41:16; Jer 51:5; Ezek 39:17; Hos 11:9; Hab 1:12). It is also used in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 1:24; Acts 2:27; 3:14; 13:35; 1 John 2:20).

However, here it is used of a heavenly steward, and not of the Lord himself. This being apparently an angel, it blends perfectly with our Lord’s reference to “the holy angels” (Matt 25:31; Mk 8:38). John also referred to the “holy angels” in the Revelation (Rev 14:10).

It is to be understood that the closer a personality is to the Lord, the more holy they become. We also should note that unholy messengers are a reproach to the Lord – if, indeed, there be such a thing.

HEW DOWN THE TREE

“He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches . . .” Other versions read, “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,” NKJV “Cut down the tree and trim off its branches,” NIV

This “watcher and holy one” has power to alter what is happening upon the earth. He has apparently been observing this tree, and is not pleased with what is happening. He therefore shouts an authoritative word that has come from heaven itself. The tree is to be suddenly and abruptly cut down. While the trunk is laying on the ground, all of its branches are to be cut off as well. This will be instantly carried out, for the word comes with unquestionable authority.

SHAKE OFF ITS LEAVES

“ . . . shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit . . .” Other versions read, “Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit,” NKJV “strip off its leaves, throw away its fruit,” NJB and “let its leaves be taken off and its fruit sent in every direction.” BBE

Thus the beauty of the tree came to a grinding halt. Its fruit was no longer accessible, but was scattered, or thrown away. Now the tree was uncomely and unfruitful – nothing but a bare trunk, cut off from its roots, stripped of its leaves and fruit, and lying useless on the ground. This was the decree of the holy watcher from heaven. There is no chance that it will not be carried out to the finest detail.

REMOVE THE BEASTS AND FOWLS

“ . . . let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches.” Other versions read, “Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches” NIV “let the beasts escape from under it, and the fowls from its branches,” DOUAY and “let the beasts flee its shade, and the birds its branches.” NAB

No longer would the beasts of the field find refuge under this once mighty tree. The birds could not nest and feed within its extensive branches. In fact, they would flee from it for fear of danger. It is as though they heard the sound of the felling axe, and felt the tremors of the tree losing its stability. Immediately, they fled from the tree. What was once for safety, now became a jeopardy. Those who looked to it for protection, shelter, and food, now saw the tree as an undesirable haven. Therefore they left it with haste.

LEAVE THE STUMP

“ 15 Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: 16 Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him: and let seven times pass over him.”

The details of this dream are most remarkable, to say nothing of Nebuchadnezzar's recollection of them. Of course, we are not to understand he did this under his own power alone, although there was no doubt a great deal of effort on his part. The purpose of this dream does not allow for an uncertain remembrance of it. The facts of the dream cannot be obscured by broad generalities or private interpretations.

In his first dream, the dream itself, with all of its details, was directly revealed to Daniel by God. This time, however, God will make the dream known to Daniel through Nebuchadnezzar. The relating of the dream, therefore, must be exact and complete, else the inspired interpretation of it will not have the intended impact.

All Things Are of God

In all of this, we again see that “all things are of God” (2 Cor 5:18). This is a statement

confirming that everything having to do with Divine determinations are wrought through God. This is stated more precisely in Romans 11:36. “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” Other versions read, “For everything comes from Him ; everything exists by His power and is intended for His glory ,” NLT and “Everything there is comes from Him and is caused by Him and exists for Him .” NJB

I am careful to state this has particular regard to the fulfilment of God’s purposes. Notwithstanding, there is nothing that occurs in the heavens, the earth, or under the earth, that is wholly without the involvement, judgment, and dominion of the mighty God of heaven. Thus, even in Nebuchadnezzar telling what he had dreamed, the Lord is at work, ensuring that the report is precise in every detail.

NEVERTHELESS

“Nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth . . .” At this point, a small ray of light penetrates the darkness of judgment. Although the “watcher and holy one” from heaven has ordered the large and productive tree to be cut down, its branches hacked off, and its fruit scattered, an element of mercy remains. The tree is cut down, not uprooted!

Leaving the Stump and Its Roots

God does not always leave the stump and roots. On one occasion Jesus declared, “But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Mat 15:13). Other versions read, “pulled up by the roots,” NIV “taken up by the roots,” BBE and “uprooted.” NRSV Elsewhere God spoke of “plucking up by the roots” (2 Chron 7:20). Ezekiel associated this kind of judgment with utter hopelessness (Ezek 17:9). Jude referred to reprobate teachers as those who “twice dead, plucked up by the roots” (Jude 1:12).

However, leaving the roots means the judgment is not intended to be permanent. Some degree of recovery will be experienced.

A Thought

Without being unduly distracted, mention should be made of the hope of a remaining root. There are those who teach God is finished with Israel, and thus there is no hope for their recovery. These teachers say God’s judgment against them in the destruction of Jerusalem meant He had utterly written them off. Thus, such people have come to actually despise the Jews, viewing them as pulled up by the roots. However, this is a wholly inaccurate representation of the mind of the Lord.

The Jewish root still remains! That “root” is still “holy,” and still nourishes prospering branches (Rom 11:16). In fact, Gentiles that are in Christ Jesus have been caused to partake of “the root and fatness of the olive tree,” along with believing Jews (Rom 11:17). They are solemnly reminded that “the

root” is bearing them (Rom 11:18).

If the tree of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was given hope by its remaining stump and roots, how much more is their hope for Israel in the continuance of its “root.” Even the patriarch Job, without a Bible, and prior to the giving of the Law, said, “For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again , and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant ” (Job 14:7-9). It is not good for Job, living in such spiritually primitive times, to have a greater understanding of Divine manners than those living in the blazing light of the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2)! More should be known in this day.

There is, then, hope for the tree of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, even though it has been suddenly and violently cut down. This is confirmed by the command to leave the stump with its roots.

A BAND OF IRON AND BRASS

“ . . . even with a band of iron and brass . . . ” Other versions read, “Bound with a band of iron and bronze,” NKJV “But with a band of iron and bronze around it,” NASB The idea is that the stump was left in the ground with a tight band of iron and brass around it.

At least two things are signified by this. First , the band would keep the root from deteriorating and splitting apart. It would hold it together for its future growth. Second , it would be a public signification that the stump should not be removed, but left in tact. While several other possibilities might well be surmised, it seems to me that the intention is to secure the root because it will once again flourish. In this case, an iron and bronze band denoted a hopeful future.

IN THE TENDER GRASS

“ . . . in the tender grass of the field.” Other versions read, “In the tender grass of the field,” NKJV “In the new grass of the field,” NASB

The idea is that the stump and its root will not be enclosed in a structure, or protected from the elements. It would remain in the open field, subjected the harsh elements of nature.

WET WITH DEW FROM HEAVEN

“ and let it be wet with the dew of heaven . . . ” Other versions read, “And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,” NASB and “Let him be bathed with the dew of heaven.” NRSV

At least two things may be seen in this expression. First , this speaks of the protection of the stump and its roots. It would be kept alive by the drenching dew of heaven. Should there be a severe drought, or rain be withheld, the dew of heaven would sustain it.

Second , it declares a humbling experience, where protection from even the elements of nature would be withheld. The whole matter depicts utter helplessness and worthlessness.

A PORTION WITH THE BEASTS

“ . . . and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth . . . ” Other versions read, “And let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth,” NKJV “And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth,” NASB “and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth.” NIV

Suddenly, the imagery is changed from the stump of a tree to a person. Remember, we are reading the solemn words of “the watcher” concerning the judgment of the tree in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream – a dream sent to him from heaven. Now we begin to sense the message is not about a tree at all. Rather, it is declaring God’s judgment against a person.

This person will be dehumanized, so to speak, and caused to dwell in the grass of the field with irrational and unthinking beasts. He will have no choice in this matter, for this is a decree handed down from the “God of gods and Lord of kings.” This person would be made to dwell in an environment unsuitable for one made in the image of God. Nevertheless, it would be appropriate for one who had conducted himself in a manner that aggravated the God of heaven.

A BEASTS HEART

“Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him . . . ” Other versions read, “Let his mind be changed from that of a man, And let a beast's mind be given to him,” NASB “Let his mind be changed from that of a human, and let the mind of an animal be given to him,” NRSV and “Let his mind be changed from the human; let him be given the sense of a beast.” NAB

Once again, remember this is a decree from the “watcher, a holy one from heaven.” The use of the word “heart,” or “mind,” NASB speaks of the human nature. The idea is that the person being judged would cease to have normal human proclivities. It is as though the Divine imagery in this individual would be suspended for a season. In such a case, there would be no essential difference between him and the brute beasts of the field. He would no longer act like a man, or have the appetites of “the offspring of God.” He would give no stirring orations, accomplish any military exploits, or build great cities.

This judgment involved the deprivation of reason. The person would be governed by the

appetites of an irrational beast. He would act and behave like a beast, being both stupid and savage. The person would see himself as a beast, not a man. His memory would not serve him, and he would not be able to purpose, or engage in productive activity as other men.

Those who have stilted and foolish views of God need to pay close attention to the words of the watcher and holy one from heaven! This is something God decreed, and it provides us with some understanding about His nature.

SEVEN TIMES

“ . . . and let seven times pass over him.” “Seven times” stand for seven years. This precise period is also mentioned in verses 23, 25, and 32. Some versions read “seven years.” NAB Still others read, “seven period of time.” NAS/NAU/NLT

The judgment, then, would last for seven years. It was not to be a brief chastening, but one of significant duration. Let no man conceive of the Lord as one so tender and kind that He cannot impose severe judgment upon those with whom He is not well pleased.

NOT AN ANALYSIS, BUT AN EDICT!

I cannot leave this section without pointing out this is not a mere foretelling of something that was going to happen. Rather, this is an edict that will be carried out, whether men consent to it or not. This is a Divine decree, not simply a declaring of things God saw happening independent of His own influence. This decree is a result of Divine rule. It is an example of God putting someone down (Psa 75:7) and bringing someone low (1 Sam 2:7).

This is the outworking of God being “Governor among the nations” (Psa 22:28), the “King of all the earth” (Psa 47:7). The kingdom is His (Matt 6:13)!

A WORD FROM EZEKIEL

This dream is remarkably like a word delivered by Ezekiel. Because of its singular likeness to our text, I will provide the entirety of the Ezekiel passage.

“Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs.

The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field.

Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches

became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen; he shall surely deal with him: I have driven him out for his wickedness. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land; and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches: To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit. Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. They also went down into hell with him unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen. To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword. This is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezek 31:3-18).

The purpose of Ezekiel’s word was to confirm Egypt would fall just like Assyria did. In both cases, the fall was the result of a Divine decree, not merely of natural deterioration in the kingdoms. Kingdoms fall by Divine mandate, not by a natural political or social process. God is the Governor among the nations, not lifeless political or social processes. Those in Christ must carefully avoid tracing the removal of empires to lifeless principles created and perpetrated by men. Whether speaking of individuals or nations, it is God with whom we have to do (Heb 4:13).

IT IS BY DECREE

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

This is God’s explanation of the reason for the dream and its fulfillment. There was something in particular in which the king was being instructed. That same lesson was intended for “all living.”

In this explanation we will see how precisely the world is being governed, and how insignificant man is on his own. It will also become apparent that Divine purpose is behind the government of the world. There are matters men are to learn, and the events of the world are so orchestrated as to make that learning possible.

The things the Lord intends for men to learn are always pivotal. They are always at the heart of things, and no man can afford to overlook them or be ignorant of them. It will become apparent to you that the design of this revelation is almost totally unknown in the Christian world. This ought not be the case. Those who are in Christ should have a greater understanding of the truth here expounded than any person prior to Christ was capable of obtaining.

DECREE OF THE WATCHERS

“This matter is by the decree of the watchers . . .” Other versions read, “This decision is by the decree of the watchers,” NKJV “This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers,” NASB and “the sentence is rendered by decree of the watchers.” NRSV

The Matter

The “matter,” “decision,” or “sentence” was the judgment against the tree in the dream. That tree, we will find, represented a person that had flourished in the earth. Thus judgment was caused to happen by a word – a “decree.” This was not a decision made by man .

The Decree

The one issuing the decree obviously had authority, and thus his word would be carried out to the most meticulous detail. This was something that would be imposed upon a person, whether it was desired or not . Free will had nothing whatsoever to do with it. It would be imposed justly, with due cause, and without any human interference.

The Watchers

There are matters among men that are governed by angelic “watchers” or superintendents. The extent of their subordinate powers is not fully known. However, I am convinced it is infinitely larger in scope than is normally perceived.

It is to be understood that the “decree of the watchers” was in strict accord with the will of God. They were carrying out a Divine mandate, and had been duly empowered to do so.

As I have suggested, the extent of the authority of these “watchers” is not fully delineated. However, they are astute observers of the affairs of men, particularly those within the provinces of their stewardship. They can act suddenly and decisively, causing things to take place among men, like the slaying of Herod (Acts 12:23). One of them stood in Balaam’s way to slay him if he continued one (Num 22:22-27). Another came to superintend the destruction of Jericho (Josh 5:14-15).

How we should learn to reckon on the presence of holy angels! Solomon even warned us to speak with them in mind. “Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?” (Eccl 5:6).

DEMAND BY THE WORD

“ . . . and the demand by the word of the holy ones . . . ” Other versions read, “command of the holy ones,” NASB “the holy ones declare the verdict,” NIV and “by order of the holy ones.” NRSV

This is a Hebraism – saying the same thing another way. The “decree” is the same as “the demand,” and “the watchers” are the same as the “holy ones.” These beings are so authoritative they make things happen with their word. An angel in the book of Revelation declared the end of due time, and the commencement of the fulfillment of God’s judgment (Rev 10:5-6). Another angel decreed the measurement of the temple, the alter, and those who worshiped therein (Rev 11:1). Still another decreed the judgment of those who had shed the blood of the saints (Rev 16: 5-7).

A Conclusion

When the extensive involvement of God and His hosts among the affairs of men is seen, we will conduct our affairs with greater sobriety. With these things in mind, it is no wonder Paul wrote, “For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels” NKJV (1 Cor 11:10). Much of the frivolity, argumentation, and uncomely appearances within the professed church would abruptly terminate if only a small portion of these things was seen.

THAT THE LIVING MAY KNOW

“ . . . to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.”

The Principle of Divine Intention

Here is the purpose for the revelation. This is why the “watchers” gave their decree, and the “holy ones” commanded the word. Everything God does has a purpose, and nothing is done without a just and righteous cause supporting it. That is why the Lord said, “ . . . and ye shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done in it, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezek 14:23).

No less eight times the words “for this cause” (in the sense of our text) occur in Scripture. God raised Pharaoh up for a cause (Ex 9:16). Jesus came into the world for cause (John 12:27; 18:37). The Lord delivered the Gentiles over to vile affections for a cause (Rom 1:26). Many people in the Corinthian church became weak and sickly, and some even died, for a cause (1 Cor 11:30). God sends strong delusion upon certain people for a cause (2 Thess 2:11). It is a cause that has made Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament (Heb 9:15). It was for a Divine cause that the Gospel was preached to those who had died (1 Pet 4:6). God is still governing among men.

There are Divine intentions that are only known to us because they have been revealed. One of them is found in our text. But there are others.

- God overthrew the good counsel of Ahithophel “to the intent” He might bring evil upon Absalom (2 Sam 17:14).
- Jesus allowed Lazarus to die “to the intent” His disciples might believe (John 11:15).
- The record of the wayward Israelites was written “to the intent” we would not lust after evil things as they did (1 Cor 10:11).
- God is bringing men into the fellowship of His mystery “to the intent” that now principalities and powers in heavenly realms might, by the church, learn of His manifold wisdom (Eph 3:9-10).

There are reasons that undergird all that God says and does. If these reasons, causes, or intentions, remain unknown, valid understanding of the Word and work of the Lord simply are not possible.

Therefore, a purely academic approach to the Word of God is anything but wise. To approach a Divine word or work with a hermeneutical principle in ones hand is an exercise in futility. Such a principle does not have the slightest clue about Divine causes, intentions, or purposes. One might even become an expert in historical backgrounds, contextual considerations, and expertise in the original language. But if the person does not know what God is doing, or the reason for it, all of those things are mere wisps of useless theological wind.

I challenge those who enter the sacred vestibule of God’s Word to unravel Nebuchadnezzar’s dream with their academic tools. Let them expound the tree, its branches, and its fruit for us. Let them step forth and comment on the beasts and fowls that benefitted from the tree. Using their academic tools, let them open to us the cutting down of the tree, the leaving of the stump, and the bands of iron and brass. And what of a beasts heart, and the dew of heaven, and the seven times? What law of hermeneutics can unravel these for us? What Hebrew scholar can open them for us? Is there a

contextual expert that can tell us the meaning of these things?

I will tell you, they will all have to place their hand over their mouths. What they have regarded so highly is impotent in this matter. They would never have concluded God's purpose for this dream if He had not told it. What is more, they would never have entertained the faintest idea of its meaning if God had not revealed it. It is an act of folly to elevate such men to places of theological prominence.

That the Living May Know

This judgment has occurred "that the living may know." This is not a lesson for angels, but for men. It is not a lesson for men who have died, but for those who remain upon the earth. This is something all who are alive need to know. It is not an optional or inconsequential unit of knowledge, but an essential one. Here is something about the Living God that men in the flesh are to know. That intention is why both the dream and its fulfillment took place.

This is a judgment, and "the Lord is known by the judgment that He executeth" (Psa 9:16). It is written that when men are "confounded and troubled," it is "that men may know" God is "over all the earth" (Psa 83:17-18). Therefore, a disinterest in, or ignorance of, what the Lord has said and done is most serious, putting the individual at great disadvantage.

The Most High Ruleth

This is the matter that is to be known, grasped by the heart and mind: "that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men." Other versions read, "is Ruiler over the realm of mankind," NASB and "is Sovereign over the kingdoms of men," NIV

This certainly casts a whole new light on the saying, "one nation under God." Whether men confess it or not, that is the truth. Whether they know it or not, this is the case. The text does not say God ought to rule the kingdoms of men, but that He does. He can overthrow them all at once as He did in the flood. He can take down one of them at a time as He did Egypt. He can bring down seven at a time as He did "the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou" (Deu 7:1).

God's Kingdom ("Thine is THE Kingdom") includes the kingdoms of men – all of them. His dominion is over all. As it is written, "The LORD hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all" (Psa 103:19).

However, this is not generally known, and those who have heard of it do not always acknowledge it. Therefore, the Lord has demonstrated this truth in history. Our text provides a case in point.

The Most High Gives Kingdoms to Whomever He Wills

Part of Divine dominion over all kingdoms involves giving them to whomever He wills. Other versions read, “bestows it on whom He wishes,” NASB “gives them to anyone He wishes,” NIV and “confers it on whom He pleases.” NJB

In this case, God can simply set one of His own choosing over the kingdom, or take it from one and give it to another as He did in the case of king Saul (1 Sam 15:28) and Solomon (1 Kgs 11:11).

Ultimately, the management of all the kingdoms of the world belongs to the Lord. This special revelation was given to Nebuchadnezzar in order that “all the living” might know this, or, more precisely, be persuaded of it.

The Most High Sets Even the Basest of Men over World Kingdoms

In the case of Saul, his successor was a better man than himself (1 Sam 15:28). However, God does not always do this. Sometimes He chooses to place “the basest of men” over the kingdoms of His own choosing. In the sense of being corrupt and defiled, Pharaoh was such a man (Ex 9:15). Ahab was another, who sold himself to do wickedness in the eyes of the Lord (1 Kgs 21:25). The Lord even caused “the worst of the heathen” to ride over His own people because of their sin (Ezek 7:24).

In the sense socially debased, like a pauper or a beggar, “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them” (1 Sam 2:8). Thus Joseph came from prison to the throne, and David from the sheepcotes. God often chooses “base things of the world, and things which are despised . . . to bring to nought things that are” (1 Cor 1:28). That is true in the political realm, as well as that of His great salvation, as our text affirms.

If this is why God made these things known to Nebuchadnezzar, it is on the part of wisdom for us to learn what He is teaching. Here is a morsel of understanding that will sweeten the cup of life, and makes trouble more tolerable.

MY OWN TESTIMONY

The stated Divine intention is particularly meaningful to me. Apart from the instruction of my good father, now with the Lord, I was rarely, if ever, exposed to teaching that affirmed the Sovereignty of God. In fact, I recall very little that was actually taught about God Himself, particularly in the capacity affirmed in this text. The general thrust of nearly all of the preaching and teaching I heard dealt with human responsibility. It did cover a wide range of things, from church polity and leadership, to the winning of souls, and the Lord's Supper. Some few words were occasionally said about holiness,

the role of women and elders, and a cursory view of the New Testament. But there was very little Deity in the focus of the preaching and teaching.

Consequently, when I began to read the Scriptures with a hearty appetite, unable to put them down, I suddenly realized there was a different emphasis in Scripture than I had heard. At once I saw the main Person in Scripture was God the Father, and Jesus Christ was the appointed means to coming to Him and understanding Him. It seemed as though I saw the power and Sovereignty of God in every line of Scripture. It was so refreshing to my Spirit, and caused me to see salvation in a whole new light. Confidence and assurance became my portion, and joy unspeakable and full of glory flooded my soul.

I had seen something of the significance of this text, and was able to relate it to my own salvation. From that day forward, I vowed I would speak more about God than man, more about blessing than duty, and more about God's will than man's will. This by no means suggested there was no such thing as duty, or that there was no place for the proper exposition of man's purpose and role in redemption. It certainly did not mean there was no such thing as human will. What it did mean is that what God commanded became more doable, as God worked in man "both to do and to will of His good please" (Phil 2:13).

I suppose I was not much different than others who had been subjected to an institutional emphasis and an academic approach to the Word of God. Such an approach is a thief and a robber, as some of us know all too well. The point to be seen in this text is that such approaches are wholly unjustified. If, during a dark era of the First Covenant, God worked in such a way as to make Himself better known to the living, what must we be able to know of Him now – now that Jesus has come?

THIS IS MY DREAM

\ “ 18 This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.” Remember, Nebuchadnezzar is proclaiming this to the nations throughout the whole world. In most precise detail he is recounting how the God of heaven has been working with him. He has told of the effects of his dream upon him and the inability of the wise men of Babylon to tell its meaning. He has also given a detailed account of the dream itself. Now, he speaks to the man of God who is standing before him. He came in at the last, but he will immediately rise to the top position by reason of his response.

A TASK FOR DANIEL

“ . . . Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof . . . ” The first time Daniel came before him about a dream, the king asked, “ Art thou able to make known unto me the dream

which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?” (Dan 2:26). This time, however, the king does not ask Daniel if he is able. He simply tells him to declare the meaning of the dream. Surely, if Daniel could tell him the dream he had forgotten, he will have no trouble interpreting a dream he has remembered. The king has gained some confidence in his exposure to this man of God.

THE INABILITY OF THE WISE MEN

“ . . . forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation . . . ” In identifying and interpreting the king’s first dream, Daniel reminded the king that his wise men were powerless to give him any valid word about his dream. This time, Nebuchadnezzar tells Daniel “the wise men” of his kingdom were “not able” to interpret his dream. It is as though the Lord makes him confess with his mouth the futility of all the wise men in Babylon to give a solitary meaning to anything He has revealed. Like the idols the wise men worshiped, “they are their own witnesses: they see not, nor know” (Isa 44:9).

THOU ART ABLE

“ , , , but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.” The king knows Daniel is no ordinary person. The resources he possessed were not natural, but supernatural. That is why he was able to tell and interpret his first dream, and he is confident he will be able to interpret this one also.

THE POWER

The power was found in the meaning of the dream, and not in the dream itself. It does no good to receive a message from God, whether it is a word or a dream, if it is not understood. Even Nebuchadnezzar knew this, although it remains unknown among many of our day. Proper understanding is superior to legitimate experience.

Those who seek religious experiences will also need an understanding of them. Experience is not an end of itself, as Israel, who experienced deliverance from Egypt, could well testify. Egypt also experienced many miracles, but learned nothing from them. If we do not learn from experience, it will hurt us.

One final word on this. God’s Word is always superior to dreams. As it is written, “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer 23:28-29).

This very truth is confirmed in our text. The dream itself, while most intriguing, amounted to confusion until the Word of the Lord was brought into the matter. The power is in God’s Word (Heb 4:12), not the king’s dream.

ASTONIED FOR ONE HOUR

“ 19a Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonied for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him.” The king is still relating his experience to the nations of the whole world – testifying of “the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward” him (Dan 4:2). He now tells of the immediate impact this dream had upon Daniel himself.

ASTONIED

“ Daniel . . . was astonied for one hour .” Other versions read, “was astonished for a time,” NKJV “was appalled for a while,” NASB “was greatly perplexed for a time,” NIV “was severely distressed for a while,” NRSV “was dismayed for a moment,” RSV “was at a loss for a time,” BBE “was amazed about one hour,” Septuagint “was overcome for a time,” NLT “was confused for a time and upset.” NJB

It should be obvious that the word “astonied” is an unusually strong word. This word literally means “stunned,” or “make amazed, be astonished, astonish, bring into desolation, be destitute, destroy, make waste, and wonder.” STRONGS

The idea is that upon hearing the dream all of Daniel’s natural wisdom dried up, and his natural mind became an arid desert. There was nothing natural in him that could decipher this dream. Of himself, he had no more power than the wise men of Babylon. It was his God that made the difference, not his mind or natural endowments.

The blast that caused this astonishment had a twofold impact on the prophet. First , it dealt with matters far beyond any mortal capability, as explained above. Second , the severity of the judgment that was proclaimed was staggering. It was not that it was staggering to think God could do such a thing, but that such swift and immediate judgment would fall upon a single individual. Holy men of God cannot become so accustomed to Divine judgment that they simply shrug it off.

Those who imagine no evil thing comes from the Lord need to sit in Nebuchadrezzar’s classroom. In fact, it would be good to have that Babylonian in some convention workshops to straighten out the stunted thinking of some professing Christians.

Some Contemporary Nonsense

There is a great deal of talk among certain religious circles that when people suffer trouble, it did not come from God. It is not unusual to hear teachers say, “God did not do that, the devil did.” But what will they say to Paul with a thorn? Or the Corinthians, many of whom were weak and sickly, and some died? What kind of word would they give to Ananias and Sapphira? Or Job, who would tell them, “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?” If in this saying Job did not sin “with his lips” (Job 2:10), what will be charged against those who have taught God’s people to disassociate trouble from God?

“An Hour”

The word “hour” does not always mean sixty minutes – although often it does (“third hour” – Mark 15:25, “sixth hour” – Matt 27:45, etc). Often, as in this text, it refers to a limited period of time. Some expressions that confirm this are, “the hour is come” (Mark 14:41), “the hour is coming” (John 5:25), and “this is your hour” (Lk 22:53).

Thus, for a brief period of time, Daniel was silent, crushed with the weight of the word he had just heard, and impressed with its severity. This was a decree from heaven. It was not something that could be negotiated, as Moses did with God concerning Israel (Ex 32:11-12; Num 14:13-20). There are some Divine judgments that cannot be reversed, and for which no intercession can be effective (Jer 7:16; 11:14; 14:11). It was just such a judgment against Jerusalem that moved the Lord Jesus to tears as He looked upon that city, where God has placed His name (Lk 19:41-44).

Daniel also sensed his own inability, yet knew this spoke of a most sever judgment. It was all difficult for his spirit to bear – but he bore it by faith “for an hour.” He was not crushed beneath its weight, but rose to minister in behalf of his God.

A Note on Sensitivity

Something should be said about spiritual sensitivity – about being touched to the core of our being with the revelations of the Almighty. On another occasion, after receiving a revelation from God, Daniel “fainted, and was sick certain days” (Dan 8:27). Of that occasion he said, “Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me , and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart” (Dan 7:28).

On another occasion he confessed, “Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption , and I retained no strength ” (Dan 10:8). Later he confessed, “O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me , and I have retained no strength . For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me ” (Dan 10:16-17).

After receiving a revelation of the coming Babylonian captivity, Habakkuk was duly impressed and sensitive. He said, “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice : rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself , that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops” (Hab 3:16).

When Ezra heard about abominations being committed among the Israelites he said, “And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished . (Ezra 9:3).

David said, “ My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments” (Psa 119:120).

Jeremiah said, “ Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness” (Jer 23:9).

Ezekiel testified, “So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit ; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me” (Ezek 3:14).

When John the beloved heard the voice of the Lord on Patmos, and turned to see him, he said, “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead .” (Rev 1:17). When recounting how he was called to testify before the nations in his old age, he wrote, “And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter . And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (Rev 10:9-11).

Enough cannot be said about the necessity of a generation of sensitive hearts who tremble at the Word of the Lord, and are effected by the message they are given to proclaim.

TROUBLING THOUGHTS

“ . . . and his thoughts troubled him.” Other versions read, “his thoughts alarmed him,” NASB “his thoughts terrified him,” NIV and “aghast at the meaning of the dream.” NLT We do not know precisely when Daniel received a understanding of this dream. It may have been as it was being related to him, or as he thought upon it during that perplexing hour. At any rate, when it became clear to him what God was saying in the king's dream, it was very “troubling” to him. This was not troubling in the

sense of refusing to believe, but in the sense Mary was “troubled” when told she heard a holy angel say, “Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women” (Luke 1:28-29).

A Telling Sign

A confrontation with the mighty God of heaven will dissolve casualness and indifference. If there is one telling sign of the spiritual poverty of our times, it is the indifferent and unaffected spirit that is found in the churches. We know that vast numbers of professed Christians remain completely unaware of God because of the way they conduct their lives. Their penchant for brevity, religious froth, and entertainment testify to the deadness of their spirit. It is a most serious situation. Casual souls have either not seen anything, or have seen it and are ignorant of what it was.

THE DREAM IS TO YOUR ENEMIES

“ 19b The king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.” The troubled spirit of Daniel is as evident to Nebuchadnezzar as Nehemiah’s sadness was to Artaxerxes (Neh 2:1-2). As in the case of Nehemiah, this indicates this was not Daniel’s normal manner. He did not carry about the look of perplexity and weight that some are wont to do.

Those who carry their feelings about on their shirt sleeves for all to see, do themselves a great disservice. They become incapable of reflecting something momentous. It is highly unlikely that such people will ever be asked to give an answer for the hope that is within them (1 Pet 3:15). They seem to be troubled and in a crisis all of the time. It was not so with Daniel. He was therefore able to minister in the name of the Lord when he was duly impressed with something.

DO NOT LET IT TROUBLE YOU

“Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. It is at once apparent that the king does not see what Daniel sees. Daniel is troubled because of what he sees. Not only does he see it, it relates to the one before whom he stands, and he obliged by his faith to tell it. It was the import of the dream that now troubled Daniel. He took no delight in the rendering of harsh judgment from the Lord.

I do not doubt that the king thought Daniel was troubled at the thought of what the king might

do to him. But nothing could be further from the truth. Daniel did not live in the fear of the king, but in the fear of the Lord, which “is clean, enduring forever” (Psa 19:9).

FOR YOUR ENEMIES

“My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.” The wording here is a bit clumsy, leaving the surface impression that the word was not for the king at all. We know from the following verses, however, that this word was, indeed, for Nebuchadnezzar. The judgment of which it speaks would happen to him, and him alone. What, then, do these words mean?

This was an expression of Daniel’s personal desire. From a human point of view, he wished this spoke of judgment against the king’s enemies instead of him. Other versions clarify this. “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!” NKJV “My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you, and its interpretation to your adversaries!” NASB and “Oh, how I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies, my lord, and not to you!” NLT This was another way of saying, “O king, live forever” (6:11). In his deep respect for the king, whom he knew God had set up, he would have preferred his enemies receive such a judgment rather than Nebuchadnezzar.

Yet, he rises above personal feelings, and declares the word of the Lord. That word will be against Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel will speak it.

YOU ARE THE TREE

“ 20 The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; 21 Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: 22 It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.”

The faith of the prophet rises to its full height as he now addresses the king. He will speak the Word of the Lord, even if it is bitter in his belly.

In this, he takes his place beside Ezekiel and John who had precisely the same experience: they spoke a message that was bitter in their belly, bringing personal discomfort of soul.

Ezekiel said of the book he was given to it, “And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe” (Ezek 2:10). When the Spirit carried him away, Ezekiel said, “So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the LORD was strong upon me” (Ezek 3:14).

John was also given a book to eat, or a message to tell. Here is what he said of the event. “And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings” (Rev 10:9-11).

You will never find a prophet or Apostle growing so accustomed to foretelling punishment that he can speak easily about it. Jeremiah wept, his eyes overflowing with rivers of tears, because of the grievous things he had to declare (Jer 9:1). Now, with sorrow of heart, Daniel must announce a Divine judgment against the king.

LEAVING NO DOUBT

Daniel leaves no doubt about this. He recounts the dream point by point, leaving nothing out. Nebuchadnezzar must not get the impression that only a part of this dream applies to him, or that it is the announcement of a principle which may or may not apply to him. Thus Daniel declares the tree, with its growth, strength, and height. He recalls how it was visible to all who were in the earth. Its leaves were pleasant to look upon, and its fruit was abundant. It provided nourishment for all. The beasts of the field remained under it, protected by its shade and nourished by its food. The birds of the air also found a habitation there, making it their home.

IT IS YOU

“It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.” This, then, was a vivid picture of the unparalleled prosperity and success of Nebuchadnezzar. He himself was the prosperous tree. As has already been declared, God Almighty had put him in that position, giving him all of his power, and handing over to him the kingdoms of the world. That is the singular reason for his growth, strength, greatness, and influence.

In this awful announcement, we see that while Daniel respected the king, he feared the Lord. Thus he was compelled to tell him all the truth. I must also remind you once again that this is Nebuchadnezzar's proclamation to the world. By declaring these details, he is showing his demise was not owing to a dreadful curse placed upon him by an angry Daniel.

SEVEN YEARS WITH THE BEASTS

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

Again, Daniel recounts every detail of the dream, leaving nothing out. The king must not get the impression this is a contrived message, or that Daniel is speaking of some vague generalities. The point is to bring understanding to the king and world. Thus he mentions what the king himself had seen. Allow me to briefly recount those things once again.

- Divine Intervention. A watcher and holy one came down from heaven.
- Benefits terminated. The watcher said to hew down the tree and destroy it.
- Hope remains. The stump with its roots were to remain in the earth.
- Protection. A band of iron and brass were to be placed around the stump.
- Isolation. The stump was to remain in the open field, in the tender grass.
- Sustenance. The dew of heaven would drench the stump.
- Humiliation. The person represented by this tree would have his portion with the beasts of the field.
- Duration. The judgment would last for seven years.

THIS IS THE DECREE

“This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king.” Remember, this is a “decree,” not merely something the Omniscient God saw coming in the future. God is not a prognosticator or a fortune teller, but the “Governor among the nations.” He elevates men to places of rulership, and puts them down – all at His will, and without consultation with men.

The dream, then, is the announcement of a judgment God has determined upon Nebuchadnezzar. It is as sure as the judgment pronounced upon Adam and Eve (Gen 3:16-19), the world of Noah's day (6:3; 6:17), and Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:13). It was as certain as the judgment of Tyre (Isa 23:1), the Babylonian captivity (Isa 39:6), and the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk 19:43-44).

What is determined in heaven cannot be thwarted by those on earth. Nor, indeed can it be diverted by Satan and his hosts.

Divine determinations are not always made known to men. Nevertheless, epochal changes among men, whether the establishment or demise of powers, are to be traced back to heaven. In every sense, it is God with whom men have to do (Heb 4:13)!

UNTIL YOU KNOW

“ 25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.”

If you have ever been tempted to think God has no dealings with the heathen, forever put that imagination away from you. There are no nations or men that are not answerable to God, or of whom God does not take account. Nebuchadnezzar was not in covenant with God, yet was accountable to Him. He was not a worshiper of God, yet was judged by Him. I say these things because some affirm the First Covenant indicated God had no dealings with anyone other than Israel. Such sophists declare the Law was for no one except Israel – even though the Spirit says it was given that “ every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God” (Rom 3:19). Such reasoning has no place among people of faith. Here is a heavenly decree passed against a Babylonian king who had other gods, and made no pretense of being subject to God.

DRIVEN FROM MEN

“That they shall drive thee from men . . . ” Other versions read, “You will be driven away from people,” NIV “they shall cast thee out from among men,” DOUAY and “You will be driven from human society.” NLT God would make Nebuchadnezzar unsuitable to dwell among men – like the Gadarene demoniac (Matt 8:28). The king would be, so to speak, dehumanized – by God ! His presence would be so intolerable he would be driven from society like a wild and unruly beast.

The thought has occurred to me that men have reason to be thankful this is not the normal manner in which God works. Notwithstanding, the record has been given to us in order that we might

know this option is at His disposal.

MADE TO EAT GRASS

“ . . . and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven . . . ” Note the finality of this judgment. This is not something that might happen – it WILL take place. There was coming a time when Nebuchadnezzar would no longer eat the dainties of the king’s table, partaking of royal fare (Dan 1:5). Instead, he would graze with the oxen, competing for the grass of the field.

You see with what extreme shame God can judge a person. It would have been severe enough, in some people’s eyes, to have the kingdom taken from Nebuchadnezzar, like it was ripped from king Saul. But this king would be MADE to eat grass, whether he thought such a thing possible or not. God could so change his appetite that he actually craved grass, and thought it to be his proper food.

Right here, it would be beneficial to mention how God can send such strong delusion to people that they will believe a lie. In truth, the Spirit witnesses that the Lord does, in fact, do this wherever men do not receive a love for the truth. “And for this cause [because they received not the love of the truth, v 11] God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Th 2:12).

Men do well to treat the truth of God with respect, heartily embracing it. God can cause them to feed on the withering grass of lies, and then condemn them because they did so. If men doubt this, they are standing in a jeopardy far more serious than the judgment that is being pronounced upon Nebuchadnezzar.

The dew of heaven would settle upon the humiliated Nebuchadnezzar. There would be no shelter for him during the cool of the night or the blast of the noon day sun.

SEVEN TIMES

“ . . . and seven times shall pass over thee . . . ” This judgment was not a brief one. It would not last for three days, like the blindness of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:9). It would not last three days like the grievous pestilence God sent upon Israel when David numbered them (2 Sam 24:10-15). It would not even last three years and six months like the drought of Elijah’s day (James 5:17). This would last seven long years. Seven years he would not have the mind of a man, but one of a beast. Seven years he would eat the grass of the field. Seven years he would have no place among men. Seven years he would be drenched with the dew of heaven.

Truly, “the way of transgressors is hard” (Prov 13:15), and “It is a fearful thing to fall into the

hands of a living God” (Heb 10:31). This is an aspect of the fear of the Lord that is scarcely known among the churches of our land.

UNTIL YOU KNOW

“ . . . till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.” From one point of view, the duration of this judgment would be seven years. From another, it would be until he knew something of critical importance. “. . . until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whomever He wishes.” NASB Other versions read, “until you acknowledge,” NIV “until you have learned,” NRSV and “til you are certain.” BBE Both of these objectives will be met.

One might well ask, “How important is it that a person learns this?” This would be an appropriate question to ask Nebuchadnezzar. I am quite sure he would tell you it was not an optional bit of Bible knowledge. Yet, I fear there are multitudes in the church who presently know even less about this matter than Nebuchadnezzar learned in a field of grass! I can tell you that in all of my Christian education, I heard precious little on this subject. Those who did speak about it were generally viewed as “Calvinists,” and their thoughts were forthwith dismissed as worthless.

Better to thrust your fingers into your ears when people like that spew their theological venom on you. I am sure Nebuchadnezzar will publically judge them on the day of judgment. It will be similar to the Queen of Sheba, who will speak to those who did not extend themselves to hear the truth of the Gospel, or Nineveh, who repented after hearing one negative sermon (Matt 12:41-42). It is better to learn from this text!

THY KINGDOM SHALL BE SURE

“ 26 And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.” The judgment of the king is harsh, but it is mingled with mercy. The words of Habakkuk the prophet come to mind. “O LORD . . . in wrath remember mercy” (Hab 3:2). Here, the mercy of God is made known. The judgment, while lengthy, would have a merciful conclusion. This too is an aspect of Divine judgment that is often made known. The Babylonian captivity lasted seventy years, and then it ended (Dan 9:2-3). After being judged by God, Manasseh had his kingdom restored (2 Chron 33:13). Of the fierce judgment of Jerusalem Jesus said, “ Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:24). And again, “For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Mat 23:39). Thank God for His mercy!

LEAVE THE STUMP AND THE ROOTS

“And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee . . .” Here is the meaning of the stump remaining in the ground, banded with iron and brass, and sustained by the dew of heaven. Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom would not fall apart during his absence. Further, it would eventually be restored to him. The Lord would not instantly slay Nebuchadnezzar as He did Herod. Nor would He permanently depose him as He did Saul. The king would not die from this judgment like Asa, and his kingdom would not degenerate to a unrecoverable state. Another king would not be set up in his place. When restored to him, the kingdom would be firm and stable.

AFTER YOU KNOW

“ . . . after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.” This was the limiting factor. As soon as this was known, as God intended for it to be known, the judgment would cease. Seeing it took seven years for this to be learned, it is apparent that acknowledging this was attended with considerable difficulty.

Now, Nebuchadnezzar would not actually learn this in the field, for there he had the heart of a beast, not that of a man. However, God knew when sufficient time had passed so that, given his right mind, the king would instantly confess the heavens rule. At that precise moment, he would again receive his right mind.

Once again, I want to draw to your attention how little the matter Nebuchadnezzar was required to know, is acknowledged in our time. Every time you hear someone say they are angry with God, you are hearing a confession that this truth is not known. When some soul asks “Where was God?” when this or that happened, you have heard the expression of someone who does not know “the heavens do rule.” Every person who refuses to obey God, balks at His commandments, or rejects His direction, does not know “the heavens do rule.” That is a most serious condition!

It is possible to so effectively learn from this text that we never again doubt the fact that “the heavens do rule.” They do not monitor, they rule! They do not suggest, they rule! They do not merely observe, they rule! That rule can be for us or against us. It can be to establish us or to bring us down. In view of this, “Humble yourselves in the sight of God” (James 4:10).

BREAK OFF THY SINS

“ 27 Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy

tranquillity.”

Now, in the true spirit of a prophet, Daniel pleads with the king. He exhorts him to receive what he says to him. He urges him to cease sinning by devoting himself to righteousness. He even holds out a word of hope. Daniel knows how to “handle the Word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15). He knows how to apply the message, using it as a basis for godly pleading. There are surely valuable lessons to be learned in his words.

ACCEPT THE COUNSEL

“Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee . . . ” Other versions read, “let my advice be acceptable to you,” NKJV and “may my advice be pleasing to you.” NASB

This is Daniel’s personal advice to the king. It is not included in the interpretation of the dream, but is the spiritually logical conclusion to it. Daniel knows how to use the Word of God. He has understanding of the implications of Divine judgment, and knows what results they should produce. He now pleads for the king to accept what he is about to say. He is speaking out of a genuine concern for the king, as well as a profound love for God.

The art of pleading with people after a godly manner is not common in our time. Salesmanship seems to have upstaged exhortation, admonition, and reasoning. You may recall that Paul “reasoned” with Felix “ of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). Joshua pressed the people to make a decision. If it did not seem appropriate to them to serve the God of Abraham, then he pressed them to choose that very day which idol they would serve. “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh 24:15). Elijah did the same thing, asking the people why they hesitated between two opinions. “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.” (1 Ki 18:21).

There is room for decided improvement in this area. Too often men and women are left to drown in their own surmising, rather than being urged to do what is right. It is proper to move people to do what is right. Our text is an excellent example of this.

BREAK OFF YOUR SINS

“ . . . and break off thy sins . . . ” Other versions read, “break away now from your sins,” NASB “Renounce your sins,” NIV “atone for your sins,” NRSV and “stop sinning.” NLT

The words are strong, and thus they should be. No person living in sin ought to be left

comfortable in it. The church is told, “Awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1 Cor 15:34) . “Be angry, and sin not” (Eph 4:26). “I write unto you that ye sin not” (1 John 2:1). Jesus told one blind man He healed, “sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee” (John 5:14). He said to the woman taken in adultery, “Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more” (John 8:11). Weak believers in Ephesus who were stealing were admonished, “steal no more” (Eph 4:28).

Refraining from sin requires spiritual violence: “break off thy sins,” or “break away now from your sins.” The church of our day needs to hear admonitions like this frequently and in power. If Nebuchadnezzar was not justified in continuing in sin, how much more is this true of those living in the great day of salvation.

BY RIGHTEOUSNESS

“ . . . by righteousness, and thine iniquities . . . ” The way to separate from sin involves more than simply refraining from transgression. There is to be a corresponding involvement in and commitment to righteousness. Thus Daniel calls upon Nebuchadnezzar to quit sinning by giving himself to righteousness. He more precisely states how to accomplish this in the next phrase.

SHOWING MERCY TO THE POOR

“ . . . by showing mercy to the poor . . . ” Other versions read, “by being kind to the oppressed,” NIV and “by pitying the poor.” YLT The indications are that the great architectural wonders of Babylon were built by poor and oppressed people – like Egypt used the poor Israelites to build “Pitham and Raamses” (Ex 1:11).

We know from Scripture that God has a particular regard for the poor. Under the Law, the Israelites were commanded to let their fields, vineyards, and olive yards lie idle every seventh year so the poor could eat from them (Ex 23:11). When they harvested their crops, they were to leave the corners of their fields for the poor to harvest (Lev 19:9-10). Jesus counseled a rich young ruler, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me” (Mat 19:21). The only counsel that James, Cephas, and John gave to Paul and Barnabas was, “remember the poor” (Gal 2:10).

Thus, Daniel’s counsel was in complete harmony with God’s previous and following dealings with His people. Nebuchadnezzar’s sins could be broken off by him showing mercy and kindness toward the poor. We should not be surprised by this, for God honored Cornelius by opening the door of faith to him because of his prayers and alms (Acts 10:1-4). Acts of kindness are not despised in the heavenly chambers. For some, that introduces problems. For others it moves them to holy activity.

TRANQUILITY LENGTHENED

“ . . . if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.” An element of hope is seen here, and a precious one at that. Other versions read, “Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity,” NKJV and “so that the time of your well-being may be longer.” BBE He does not say the judgment will

not happen, but that it might very well be postponed, or delayed for a season. A few more years of tranquility might very well occur.

This is precisely what God did for Solomon, even though he was not worthy of such consideration. After telling Solomon the kingdom was doing to be taken from him, the Lord added, "Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son" (1 Ki 11:12).

A similar thing happened to Hezekiah, who did conduct himself more honorably in the closing of his life than Solomon. When told of the Babylonian captivity, it was made clear to Hezekiah that it would not occur in his days. He responded, "Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?" (2 Ki 20:19).

Thus Daniel urges Nebuchadnezzar to change the way in which he lived, thereby opening the door for a few more tranquil and peaceful years. This is a marvelous display of mercy!

We should learn from this that God is not eager to judge, and will make provision for men to change their ways. The Lord even said to Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Gen 4:7). Let all take these things to heart.

IT CAME TO PASS

"28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar." In confirmation of the Word of the Lord, the decree of the watchers, and the word of the holy ones, all of these things came upon king Nebuchadnezzar. They were fulfilled to the finest and most exacting detail. All of this will be made known in the passage that follows.

Thus we learn that "Where the word of a King is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" (Eccl 8:4). Again it is written, "Behold, He taketh away, who can Hinder Him? who will say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Job 9:12). And again, "If He cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder Him?" (Job 11:10).

Let us hear the testimony of God Himself. "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa 46:10). This is all confirmed in Nebuchadnezzar.

CONCLUSION

The Lord said of evil Pharaoh, “And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth ” (Ex 9:16). That surely came to pass. Who in all the world has not heard of the overthrow of Pharaoh and his armies? Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law to Moses heard (Ex 18:1). In Jericho, Rahab said they had heard (Josh 2:10). The inhabitants of Gibeon said they had heard (Josh 9:9). Balak, king of the Moabites, said he had heard (Num 22:5). Indeed, Divine objectives were realized.

Now, just that surely, God has raised up Nebuchadnezzar to testify of God’s greatness to the nations. In our text, he had published a proclamation to all nations, testifying to the manner in which God worked with him. They learned that God raises up kings, and brings them down at will. He chastens, and even recovers them. He can drive them out from among men, and bring them back again. He can make them great or humiliate them. He is “the Most High God,” and has demonstrated Himself to be so.

This is a God you can trust – yea, must trust! It is one who can hold you up, strengthen you, guide you, and cause you to stand. Can you believe that?

The Prophecy of Daniel

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, FILLED WITH PRIDE, THEN HUMBLLED

Lesson #15

INTRODUCTION

Our text deals with one of the singular temporal judgments of God against a man. In the realm of flesh and blood, it has no equal. Never before or after was a mortal so significantly altered in appearance and mind as king Nebuchadnezzar. His judgment was to individuals what the flood was to the all of the world's history – unparalleled.

God has dealt with certain individuals in most unique and arresting ways, setting them apart from all others. This has been done for our learning, that we might become more familiar with His ways. A few examples will suffice to bring this home to our conscience. It is imperative that we see how eager God is to show Himself to us.

- An entire world. In the days of Noah, God revealed how extensive His judgment can be. The entire world, saving for eight souls, was destroyed by water (Gen 7:21).
- Entire nations. The nation of the Amalekites provides an example of Divine judgment against an entire nation, blotting out even its remembrance from under the sun (Deut 25:19).
- Entire Cities. In Sodom and Gomorrah the Lord made known that His judgment can fall upon entire cities, even to the point of utterly removing them from the face of the earth (Deut 29:23).
- Adam. An entire race was judged because of his single act of disobedience (Rom 5:12-19).
- Cain. A punishment of such magnitude was given to him because of his murder of Cain, that he thought it impossible to bear (Gen 4:13-14).
- Job. Here was a single example of how much a person can suffer, and yet maintain his integrity (Job 1:22; 2:3).
- Abraham. One person was so blessed as to impact the entire world (Gen 12:1-3).
- Joseph. In a single individual, adversity was shown to be inferior to blessing (Gen 50:20).
- Pharaoh. Unparalleled judgments were rendered against this man and his nation in order to make God's power known (Ex 9:16).
- David. Although he lived in inferior times, this man was made superior by his closeness to and appetite for the Living God (1 Sam 13:14).
- Solomon. In this man God revealed how much wisdom can be given to a single individual, independent of the ordinary earning process (1 Kgs 4:29).
- Nebuchadnezzar. Here we see how awful the judgment of God can be, and how long it can be endured (Dan 4).
- Paul the Apostle. Here was a single man, so blessed with spiritual understanding, that he affected an

entire world (Acts 26:17-18).

God Tries the Hearts of Men

Now, in king Nebuchadnezzar, we behold the remarkable extent to which Divine judgment can be poured out on a single individual – and yet a recovery still be experienced. The manner in which God dealt with this man stands alone in the annals of history – absolutely unique. This is intended to confirm to our hearts that the eyes of the Lord are upon the whole earth. As it is written, “The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men” (Psa 11:4). Because He is “the Lord of all the earth” (Zech 6:5), no person is exempt from God’s scrutiny, judgment, and correction.

There is a notion among men that God does not concern himself with the affairs of the ungodly, or those who are not in covenant with Him. Thus some view the Law as having to do only with Israel – as though God would allow other men to transgress that Law with impunity. Nothing could be further from the truth! God extended mercy to Cornelius because he walked in accord with His Law (Acts 10:1-4). Now He will judge Nebuchadnezzar for walking contrary to it, by not loving and honoring the God of heaven.

We Can Learn From Others

There is no need for every individual to have to “learn the hard way.” All of these things are written for our learning (Rom 15:4). In fact, the Spirit declares things “happened” to Israel “as examples, and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” NIV (1 Cor 10:11).

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

Our faith can take hold of these accounts and gain all of the benefits realized by the very people who experienced them. In some cases, what happened to others is more profitable for us than it was for them. The saints can personally profit from the experiences of their predecessors.

View Scripture Properly

For this reason, the people of God must exercise themselves to avoid treating Scriptural accounts as mere historical records or stories. The involvement of God with men, whether for blessing or cursing, is always deliberate, and with a mind to make His nature and will known. Every Scriptural account of Divine interposition in the affairs of men reveals the character of God, as well as that of men. The seeds of understanding are sown in them all. Each record is like a container in which indispensable lessons can be learned, insights received, and direction experienced.

At their heart, the Scriptures are an exposition of God Himself. They delineate His Person and His will, and that for a reason. If God is not seen in Scripture, nothing is seen at all. In all of these things, the Scriptures are making us “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim 3:15). This marvelous wisdom is not

only realized by the directives of Scripture, and the duties of men. It is also seen in God's response to the various attitudes of His creation.

The text before us shows the Divine manner toward the proud, and those who exalt themselves. It reveals principles that apply to the lowly beggar as well as the impressive king. Whether it is Korah, Nebuchadnezzar, or Herod, the proud will not go unpunished. No person is exempt from Divine scrutiny. There is no such thing as a person God does not evaluate and judge. His eyes are always upon the sons of men.

AT THE END OF TWELVE MONTHS

“ 4:29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?”

As is the manner of the Spirit, He moves along as though leaping from one mountain peak to another – from one Divine work to another. He never is bogged down with meaningless details. The particulars of what occurred between the king's global proclamation and the eruption of his pride are incidental. They are not profitable for edification, and would only tend to distract us from the real benefit.

Those who handle the Word of God must take due note of this Divine manner. With care those who speak in behalf of the Lord must avoid meaningless and profitless details that only stir up godless curiosity. The bane of raw scholasticism is that it tends to appeal to human curiosity, while starving the soul and ignoring faith. It is not unusual to see academicians who are expert in trivia, but unlearned in matters of eternal consequence. This condition is the result of not being able to properly navigate in the truth of God. Such poor souls cannot leap from mountain to mountain, gaining the benefit of Divine perspective. They do not have “hinds feet ” (2 Sam 22:34), and thus are actually spiritually crippled.

More specifically, the historical peaks of which I speak are occasions in which the Lord is working more prominently, shaping history for His glory in a distinct way. They are points of Divine focus, when He is carrying out His purpose.

While the Lord is “Lord over all,” managing the affairs of this world for His own glory, there are matters in which He is particularly active. There are individuals with whom He especially works, and in whom He reveals more of Himself. Nebuchadnezzar is such a person.

AT THE END OF TWELVE MONTHS

“At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.” This event takes place twelve months after Daniel interpreted his dream, announcing that Divine judgment was going to fall upon him. It will at once become evident that he has all but forgotten what was so forcefully declared to him twelve months earlier. Remember how precisely God had spoken to him through Daniel. A remarkable number of details were given to him.

- He had grown and become strong (4:22a).
- His greatness grew, reaching into heaven, and his dominion to the end of the earth (4:22b).
- He would be driven from men (4:25a).
- His dwelling would be with the beasts of the field (4:25b).
- He would eat grass as the oxen (4:25c).
- He would be wet with the dew of heaven (4:25d).
- He would be in this state for seven long years (4:25e).
- He would come to know the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, giving it to whomever He wills (4:25f).
- After he knew the heavens do rule, His kingdom would be restored to him (4:26).
- He was counseled to renounce his sins and do what is right, in hope the judgment would be delayed (4:27).

The message was certainly arresting! It should have provoked firm resolve and a change of life. But now, twelve short months later, the authoritative word he heard was all but forgotten.

The Manner of the Flesh

As I have indicated before, it is the manner of the flesh to forget the Word of the Lord. It cannot learn the truth of God, for such things are foolishness to the flesh. As it is written, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14).

It simply is not possible to train the flesh so it retains the Word of the Lord. It can neither receive nor profit from the revelation of God. This is why Jesus said “the flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63). It contributes nothing to matters of eternal consequence.

This is why Israel forsook the Lord, provoking Him to abhor His own inheritance (Psa 106:40). It is why Solomon departed from God in his latter years, angering the Lord because He had appeared to him “twice” (1 Kgs 11:9). It is why the disciples were spiritually obtuse prior to the exaltation of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit (Matt 14:31; 21:20; John 20:9; Mk 9:32).

“The flesh profiteth nothing.” It cannot learn and retain the things of God. The flesh is a bag filled with holes that cannot store up the things of God, or realize lasting benefits from His revelations. It cannot be trained to consistently do what it right, nor can it be changed for the good. Blessed is the person who learns this, and ceases to rely upon the flesh. Remember, “The flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63).

Whatever one may think about the fallen condition of man, his depravity, etc. – apart from a new birth, it is not possible to see or enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5). Men haggle about HOW a person is born again. Too often, they have not been convinced of the necessity of the new birth . Once that conviction comes, they will more readily receive what the Lord has clearly made known. There is no question that the new birth is realized in an ordained procedure. However, in Scripture, the procedure is not the emphasis, but the necessity of the new birth.

The conduct of Nebuchadnezzar in our text confirms all of this to be true. He had witnessed the working of the Lord through Daniel. Twice God had revealed things to him that concerned his own person and kingdom. The first time, the destiny of all world kingdoms was even made known to him. He personally saw the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and attested to their “clean escape.” Yet, these things passed through him leaving no Divine residue upon his soul. The carnal mind is truly “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). That “enmity” is made known in forgetfulness as well as aggressiveness against the Lord’s people.

THIS GREAT BABYLON

“ Is not this great Babylon . . . ” As the king walked on the top of his magnificent palace, the dazzling city of Babylon stretched out before his eyes. Its hanging gardens were one of the wonders of the world. Splendor and unparalleled grandeur were found in every facet of what he saw.

Historical Account

History tells us Nebuchadnezzar regarded this city as the apple of his eye, and that the palace was its most glorious ornament. It was the center of the whole country, covered a vast space, and was visible far and wide. It was built of brick and bitumen (an asphalt of ancient times used as a cement and mortar). It was enriched with cedar and iron, and decorated with countless inscriptions and paintings. The tower contained the treasures of Nebuchadnezzar’s royalty, with silver, gold, metals, gems, and

immense treasures of rare value. Its walls were three hundred and eighty feet high, and eighty-five feet thick. Each side of the quadrilateral they enclosed was fifteen miles in length. The mighty Euphrates flowed through the midst of the city, which is sad to have covered a space of two hundred square miles. On its farther bank, terrace upon terrace was seen up to its central altar, where the huge Temple of Bel with all of its dependent temples and palaces resided. The vast circuit of the walls enclosed not only houses, but contained interspaces of gardens, palm-groves, orchards, and corn-land sufficient to sustain the entire population. Here and there were temples to Nebo, Sin the moon god, Mylitta, Nana, Samas, and other Babylonian deities. There were also numerous aqueducts, or conduits for water, forts, and palaces. The walls themselves contained one hundred brazen gates. DEAN F.W. FARRAR, Expositor's Bible

From the standpoint of appearance, the grandeur of Babylon is beyond all controversy impressive. Although this city was originally built by Semiramis, Nebuchadnezzar had so enhanced and adorned it that its total appearance had been altered. Now the king peruses the large and ornate city and is filled with pride. This is a city that would be a unique and impressive today as it was in Nebuchadnezzar's time.

BUILT BY MY POWER AND FOR MY HONOR

“ . . . that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power , and for the honor of my majesty ?” Other versions refer to “the house of the kingdom” as “a royal dwelling,” NKJV “a royal residence,” NASB and “a royal capital.” NRSV

Previously, when Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed of the great multi-metaled statue, Daniel told him, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (Dan 2:37). Twelve months earlier Daniel said the king would be punished until he knew “that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will ” (Dan 4:25). But now, he has forgotten those solemn words, and begins to boast as though his own hand had wrought all of these things.

From the viewpoint of men, there is not a single worldly historian who would not have concurred that the king's judgment was right. Any newspaper reporter would have agreed. Any earthly politician would have said “ Amen” – for that is the way it appeared. But the appearance led both Nebuchadnezzar and all flesh to the wrong conclusion. The “invisible” God was behind it all. His omnipotent hand may not have been apparent, but men would be held in strict account for not recognizing it. If God had not given the king his kingdom and all of its glory, he could not have planted a single shrub that would have flourished. All of his accomplishments sprang from God's beneficent hand.

NO ORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCE

But this is no ordinary circumstance! One year earlier, every detail that will now occur was spelled out to Nebuchadnezzar. He was without excuse! Sufficient warning had been given to the king to make some correction in his ways. Daniel had even counseled him to separate himself from sin and do what was right. He had apparently ignored the warning.

ALL MEN ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE

Herein is a marvelous consideration. Although “the flesh profiteth nothing,” and cannot retain the things of God, men are responsible to do so. For some, this appears unfair, but it is not. It is possible for men with no strength of themselves to cry out as David did, “Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression” (Psa 19:13).

A Principle to be Seen

There is a vital principle to be seen in all of this. At the every moment men are apprised of the truth of God, they should set themselves to conform to it, calling upon the name of the Lord. Such responses are what especially endeared men like Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel and David to the Lord. They were men who instantly responded to the God of heaven. Those who delay their response to God, thrusting the Word of the Lord from themselves, immediately begin to walk under His wrath, which hovers over them.

There are many disadvantages in the current generation. However, none of them are as serious as the notion that God gives men a lot of time to think about their relationship to Himself . I find this imagination being perpetrated in nearly the whole manner of contemporary Christianity. It is in the preaching and the music, the church programs, and religious education. There is a remarkable lack of a sense of urgency and immediacy. A awareness of the importance of responding in faith to God is rarely seen. These are, indeed, “perilous times.”

All men must draw near to this text, and learn intently of the ways of the God to whom they owe everything.

IMMEDIATELY, A VOICE FROM HEAVEN

“ 31 While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.”

Does the Lord really take note of what men say? Gentile men? Those who are not in covenant with Him? Kings of heathen nations? The text suggests that Nebuchadnezzar was alone when the notion of his own greatness was expressed by him. However, his words were not hidden from God. There is a sense in which all of our words are public. We must not allow ourselves to slip into spiritual slumber so that this truth eludes us! Solomon once said of those who spoke against the king, “Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter” (Eccl 10:20). How much more is this true of those who rob God of His glory by taking credit for what he has done!

You may recall that Jesus spoke of a person who was blessed with an abundance. Instead of giving God glory, he determined to build more warehouses, making provisions to consume all of the benefits himself: “And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19). Jesus does not say the man was a Jew or a Gentile, in covenant with God or not. That was not even the point. This man had received blessing from God, but treated it as though he was the source and chief beneficiary of it all. No sooner had this thought arisen in his heart, than God responded. “But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” (Luke 12:20).

WHILE IT WAS IN HIS MOUTH

“While the word was in the king's mouth . . .” Other versions read “While these words were still on the king's lips.” NAB/NIV The idea is, “While he was still speaking these words.” NLT The king had not even finished speaking when his words evoked a response from heaven! To put it another way, words from heaven drowned out and terminated the words of the king. Heavenly interruptions bring the expressions of the flesh to a grinding halt. The Sovereign God of heaven will not sing a duet with the kings of the earth. He will rather cause their arrogant words to cease by thundering at them from heaven.

THERE FELL A VOICE

“ . . . there fell a voice from heaven . . .” So far as the record is concerned, God had never before spoken directly to Nebuchadnezzar. He had sent dreams and thoughts into his head while he was upon his bed. But the messages themselves were delivered to the king by Daniel – at least up to this point. Now God speaks more directly to the king, and with less tolerance than before.

It is ever true, “He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Prov 29:1). It is true that the judgment of Nebuchadnezzar was not, from one point of view, “without remedy.” Yet, from another view, it was, indeed, “without remedy,” for it could not be averted, or even postponed for a single hour. Daniel had told the king he might be able to prolong the judgment by breaking off his sins and doing righteously (4:27). Having ignored that counsel, the word of his demise now comes directly from heaven to Nebuchadnezzar.

THE KINGDOM IS DEPARTED

“ . . . saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.”

This Is For You!

Other versions read, “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared ,” NASB “This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar,” NIV and “O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you !” NLT There is no vagueness or ambiguity. The message is to the point and arresting. In the very midst

of carnal boasting, a voice from heaven breaks through the delusion of the king and declares the wrong one is talking. Heaven will not allow the king to speak any longer. The heavens do rule, and they will do the speaking.

The Kingdom Is Departed

Other versions read, “sovereignty has been removed from you,” NASB “royal authority has been taken from you,” NIV “You are no longer ruler of this kingdom,” NLT and “the empire has been taken from you.” NJB

You may recall that a similar word was spoken to king Saul. “But now thy kingdom shall not continue : the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee ” (1 Sam 13:14). In the case of king Saul, by a word from heaven, the kingdom was wrested from and given to David. God “rejected” Saul from being king (1 Sam 15:23; 16:1).

Now, the Lord who gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom takes it from him. Unlike Saul, it will not be given to another, but will be held in tact until God is satisfied the king has learned what is intended by this judgment.

This is an incident in which we are apprised of the cause of the king’s fall. This is not, however, always the case. That is, we are not always told of the specific reason for the thrusting down of a powerful ruler. But in all cases, and with no exceptions, “God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psa 75:7).

This is such a prominent thread of truth that Mary, the mother of our Lord, confessed it in her marvelous response to the revelation of God. “He hath put down the mighty from their seats” (Luke 1:52). Jesus also reminded us, “every one that exalteth himself shall be abased” (Lk 18:14). David said, “He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way” (Psa 107:40). In keeping with the imagery of the tree in the king’s dream, Ezekiel spoke of the Lord bringing down “the high tree” (Ezek 17:24).

A Western World Inhibition

We give thanks for the congenial government under which we live, not taking the liberties we enjoy for granted. There is, however, a certain inhibition related to democracy of which we do well to be aware. Too often, God is not acknowledged in the process of Presidents being raised up or deposed. The raising up and putting down of rulers is not limited to the kings of ancient times, or to governments ruled by a single individual. While we may not be able to precisely identify the hand of the Lord, we are to believe it is present in affairs of the State. A strong and healthy awareness of the Lord in all things will contribute to the peace and tranquility of the soul. Whether it is Babylon or the United States, it is

God who raises up rulers and casts them down. God has not abdicated to democracy! An understanding of this will serve to promote humility. It will also build confidence in those who believe.

THEY SHALL DRIVE THEE FROM MEN

“ 32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.”

In the matter of WHEN this judgment would come, the king had a choice. Daniel counseled him, “Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness, and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity” (4:27). But the king will have no choice in this matter. Here is a judgment that will be imposed upon him, like the dethroning of king Saul was imposed upon him. Those who are admonished by God will be given time to respond. But that is not a perpetual privilege. When God’s Spirit ceases to strive with men, the opportunity of choice is brought to a grinding halt.

We do not know the precise time when the privilege of choice will be withdrawn from men, but we do well to not tempt the Lord our God on the matter. In Noah’s day, the destruction of the world was decreed following a long period of Divine longsuffering. The hundred and twenty years that were given were not time for the world to repent, but for Noah to complete the ark by which he saved his house. Whether we are speaking of those in the days of Noah, Nebuchadnezzar, or those who are meandering through this day of grace with no interest in eternal things, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31).

THEY SHALL DRIVE THEE FROM MEN

“And they shall drive thee from men . . .” The NRSV reads, “you will be driven away from human society.” Although he was an offspring of Adam, the king would no longer have a place among his peers. That is how precise God can be in His righteous judgments.

Once again, there is no choice here – no summons to repent, no plea for awakening. The time of longsuffering had ended, and Nebuchadnezzar would not be allowed to dwell among men – even though he himself was a man. Even sinful men, idolaters, magicians and sorcerers would not want him around. That is how repulsive God can make a person!

You may recall that a judgment of this manner was brought upon Cain. Although it was not precisely the same as that of Nebuchadnezzar, it was similar in some respects. After the Lord had imposed His judgment upon Cain, he responded, “My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, Thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from Thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me” (Gen 4:13-14). In a singular act of mercy, God pronounced a judgment upon any who would take the life of Cain.

If you have ever had a fear of being isolated from everyone, with no place among the living, you do well to ponder the judgment of king Nebuchadnezzar. That is precisely what happened to him. Be responsive to God. He is able to keep you from such a state, as well as put you into it

DWELLING WITH THE BEASTS

“ . . . and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee . . . ” The words “beasts of the field” are translated “wild beasts ” in the NIV. Other versions read the same way: “wild beasts of the field,” Septuagint “wild animals,” NLT/NJB/DOUAY

The term “ beasts of the field” generally denote undomesticated animals, as distinguished from “flocks” and “herds” tended by an individual. When Israel entered Canaan, the Lord drove out the nations occupying the land “little by little,” “lest the beasts of the field increase” upon the land, becoming too numerous for them to handle (Deut 7:22). When David faced Goliath, the giant said he was going to feed David’s flesh to “the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field” (1 Sam 17:44). David also declared “the wild beasts of the field” belonged to God (Psa 50:11).

Nebuchadnezzar, therefore, would not be simply put among the domesticated and well cared for cattle of the country. He would be “in the wild,” so to speak, with no certain dwelling place – wandering here and there, searching for sprigs of grass for which he would now have a hearty appetite.

Men would no longer be able to tolerate his presence, but he would fit in well with the untamed and impersonal creatures of the wild. Now he would compete with beasts for the grass of the field, until seven long years had passed.

I can only imagine what fear must have struck the heart of Nebuchadnezzar when he heard these words. Ample time was given to the king to know full well what was coming upon him from the Lord.

UNTIL YOU KNOW

“ . . . until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will.”

Here again, the words spoken to him previously by the prophet Daniel, fall from heaven upon his ears. Here are two matters he has forgotten, though told them twice: “the Most High is Sovereign over the kingdoms of men,” and He gives those kingdoms “to anyone He wishes.” NIV He heard a watcher from heaven say these words in his dream (4:17), and Daniel repeated them in the interpretation of that dream (4:25).

The word “know,” therefore, does not mean a mere increase in factual knowledge. It involves more than being exposed to the truth of reference, for Nebuchadnezzar had already been exposed to this. However, this had not sunk down into his ears (Lk 9:44). The words had not registered upon his heart or dawned upon his conscience. He could not associate his own state with the fact of God’s universal and unquestionable dominion.

An Example of Obtuseness

Nebuchadnezzar was, at this point, like the disciples who had not yet seen the significance of Jesus feeding the multitude – that is, they could not apply it to their circumstance. Here is a most excellent example of NOT knowing something to which you were knowledgeably exposed. You may recall this incident. It is full of instruction for us. On one occasion, Jesus departed from the multitudes and entered into a ship with His disciples. In their haste, the disciples forgot to bring bread, and consequently had no more than “one loaf.” As they proceeded on their journey, Jesus “charged them saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.” The disciples reasoned among themselves saying, “It is because we have no bread.” Jesus then upbraided them because of their hardened hearts, asking why they did not understand. He then reminded them of events in which they themselves had been involved. “When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? They say unto him, Twelve. And when the seven among four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up? And they said, Seven.” One can almost see the Lord shaking His head saying, “How is it that ye do not understand?” (Mark 8:13-21).

The disciples were not able to handle the truth that was revealed in the feeding of the multitudes. They could not relate it to their present circumstance. Academically, they knew the answers to Christ’s questions, and would have received the highest grade in a worldly classroom. But they failed the Divine examination because they really did not know.

This is the situation with the king. He had been told the Most High ruled over all, and could no doubt have recited those words in an academic environment. But God does not make things known so we can recall them from an academic point of view. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar will learn this truth by personal experience. Then it will register more fully upon his understanding.

APPLICATION

This judgment fell upon the king when he was lifted up in pride. The Scriptures make clear how God regards the proud – those who boast of their own achievements while they are occupying the Lord's world and living under His government.

- “Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed , which do err from thy commandments.” (Psa 119:21)
- “Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knoweth afar off .” (Psa 138:6)
- “The LORD will destroy the house of the proud : but he will establish the border of the widow.” (Prov 15:25)
- “And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease , and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.” (Isa 13:11)
- “He hath showed strength with his arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.”. (Luke 1:51)
- “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud , but giveth grace unto the humble.” (James 4:6)
- “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud , and giveth grace to the humble.” (1 Pet 5:5)

The proud are those who conduct their lives as though there was no God – no one to whom they were accountable, and from whom every single benefit they have was derived. Like Nebuchadnezzar, they imagine their successes are their own doing, and therefore are not noted for thanksgiving or praise.

One of the great jeopardies of our time is the promotion of pride. Nearly the entire fabric of Western society encourages and feeds pride. Little in the social structure encourage humility or discourage pride. Too often, the dreadful propensity to human pride is not checked within the church. With its inclination toward entertainment, organization, and institutionalism, pride easily surfaces and flourishes among the very people who have been called to humility and the knowledge of God.

We do well to tune our hearts to learn from king Nebuchadnezzar! The record of his experience can be an effective teacher, if we will allow it. It can effectively warn, admonish, comfort, and instruct us in the ways of the Lord. Sit at these blessed table and feed your soul. It will do you good.

THE SAME HOUR

“ 33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws.”

The events that follow are the fulfillment of a heavenly decree. They were not the result of any natural process of degeneration, but were imposed upon the king by the God of heaven. This is something God can do whenever He wills. The fact that He does not do so repeatedly confirms He is longsuffering. Nevertheless, men are not to abuse that longsuffering. The proud will be abased in due season with a punishment far worse than that endured by Nebuchadnezzar.

THE SAME HOUR

“The same hour was the thing fulfilled . . .” The judgment was swift – within a matter of minutes. There was time to anticipate the dreadful curse, but no time or ability to avert it. There was time for terror to fill the heart, but no time for peace to enter. Solomon once said, “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily , therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl 8:11). But that is not the case here. God does not always delay His judgments, and men should not proceed through life as though He did.

- When Elisha’s servant took a reward from Naaman – a reward the prophet had rejected – he was instantly stricken with leprosy (2 Kgs 5:27).
- When Uzziah took it upon himself to burn incense as though he was a priest, leprosy rose up in his forehead that very instant (2 Chron 26:19).
- When Uzzah put forth his hand to steady the ark of the covenant, which was not to be touched, he was immediately struck dead by the Lord (2 Sam 6:7).
- When Herod received the praises of the people as though he was a god, the angel of the Lord immediately smote him, and he died (Acts 12:23).
- When Ananias and Sapphria lied about their giving, the Lord instantly struck Ananias dead, and three hours later when Peter confronted Sapphira, she was instantly struck dead also (Acts 5:5,10).

Thus the king was judged immediately – “the same hour.” Serious people must recognize God is

quite capable of instant judgment. Such knowledge will promote both fear and humility in those possessing it. It will provide them with another reason for not sinning, and another cause for resisting the devil and quenching his fiery darts with the good shield of faith.

DRIVEN FROM MEN

“ . . . and he was driven from men . . . ” In precise fulfillment of the Word of God, the king was thrust from the society of men, who bear God’s image, taking up residency with the beasts who do not bare that image. Just as surely as Lot’s wife was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26), Nebuchadnezzar was so altered as to forfeit a right to dwell among men.

He Did Eat Grass

“ . . . and did eat grass as oxen . . . ” It is clear that he now ate grass out of preference – that is how God “made” him do it. His heart was changed from that of a man to that of a beast (4:16). Thus his manners were so altered that grass became his food of choice.

His Body Was Wet

“ . . . and his body was wet with the dew of heaven . . . ” That is, he was without any clothing – stripped of every vestige of his kingly dignity, as well as the normal respect afforded to men. Imagine the most significant king in all of the earth, stripped of his royal apparel, and lying naked in the open field. Truly, “whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased” (Matt 23:12). This will eventually happen to all who exalt themselves. God provided us a preview of this determination in king Nebuchadnezzar. If we will allow it to do so, his record will promote humility within us.

His Hairs Grew Like Eagles Feathers

“ . . . till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers . . . ” There was such an alteration in Nebuchadnezzar’s physical constitution that his hair grew long like an eagles’ feathers. His hair was not cut for seven years, and during that long period probably grew thick, black, and strong. This is a detail that was not included in Daniel’s interpretation. We see, therefore, that the judgment of God was even worse than described by the prophet of God.

His Nails Were Like Birds’ Claws

“ . . . and his nails like birds' claws.” There are some who believe “seven times” means seven days, seven weeks, or seven months – but not seven years. This passage confirms this could not have been the case. Nebuchadnezzar was not instantly transformed into the form of a beast. His hair grew into the likeness of eagles’ feathers, and his nails grew into the likeness of a birds claws – long and sharp. In other words, over the period of his judgment, his condition grew worse, not better.

At least two valuable lessons can be learned here. First , that God’s judgments are sever, and do not become better or less severe with the passing of time. That is another reason “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). Second , pride is not easily subdued within men. Those who allow it to rise in their hearts will find it does not leave easily. In the case of

Nebuchadnezzar, it took seven years to root it out of him.

In order to illustrate the depths to which a person can descend when deprived of their mind, I provide the following excerpt from The Second Annual Report of the Prison Discipline Society. It describes the condition of patients before being admitted to an insane asylum, and reflects conditions in the state of Massachusetts during the nineteenth century.

“ **No. 1.** Had been in prison twenty-eight years when he was brought to the Institution. During seven years he had not felt the influence of fire, and many nights he had not lain down for fear of freezing. He had not been shaved for twenty-eight years, and had been provoked and excited by the introduction of hundreds to see the exhibition of his raving.

No. 2. Had been in one prison fourteen years: he was naked — his hair and beard grown long — and his skin so entirely filled with the dust of charcoal as to render it impossible, from its appearance, to discover what nation he was of. He was in the habit of screaming so loud as to annoy the whole neighborhood, and was considered a most dangerous and desperate man.

No. 3. An old man of seventy years of age or more; had been chained for twenty-five years, and had his chain taken off but once in that time.

No. 4. A female: had so long been confined with a short chain as wholly to lose the use of her lower limbs. Her health had been materially impaired by confinement, and she was unable to stand, and had not walked for years.

No. 8. Had been ten years without clothes: a most inconceivably filthy and degraded being: exceedingly violent and outrageous.

No. 9. Another female, exceedingly filthy in her habits, had not worn clothes for two years, during which time she had been confined in a filthy cell, destitute of everything like comfort, tearing everything in pieces that was given her.

No. 10. Had been insane eight years: almost the whole of the time in jail and in a cage.” BARNES COMMENTARY ON DANIEL

If the above things could take place over 1,800 years after Jesus had spoiled principalities and powers, one can only imagine to what extent they could have occurred to Nebuchadnezzar – particularly since his was a focused and purposeful judgment from God Himself.

It is sobering to think of these things. You must not retire at the end of the day without thanking God for a sound mind. Truly, it is a blessing to have one!

AT THE END OF THE DAYS

“ 34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation . . . ”

It is apparent that Nebuchadnezzar recalled nothing of that dreadful time in the open field. He was given the heart of a beast, and his reason departed from him. The only semblance of humanity that remained with him was his body – and that was greatly distorted in both appearance and manners.

But now, Nebuchadnezzar is proclaiming to whole world what happened to him, and what he has learned from it. He is doing this so that God may be the better known. He was surely God’s servant when he came against Judah (Jer 27:6). Now he is serving God in an even more lofty capacity, declaring that He rules over the affairs of men, whether they recognize it or not.

AT THE END OF THE DAYS

“And at the end of the days . . . ” The phrase “end of the days” denotes the end of the appointed period in which he was driven from among men. The total length determined was fulfilled – seven years. From one point of view, it was an appointment of seven years. From another, those seven years were made up of days – one miserable day at a time!

Neither Satan nor man could make it shorter or longer. Truly, “times” are in the hand of the Lord, whether for blessing or cursing, benefit or judgment (Psa 31:15; Acts 1:7).

In Scripture, “times” speak of Divine determinations and control. They are epochs that are managed by the Lord. Some of them include “the times of the Gentiles” (Lk 21:24), “times of refreshing” (Acts 3:21), “the times of the restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21), and “the times of ignorance” that preceded the coming of Christ (Acts 17:30). It is the business of God’s people to “know the times,” not having to be taught as Nebuchadnezzar (Matt 16:3; Rom 13:11).

I LIFTED UP MY EYES

“ . . . I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven . . . ” Other versions read, “lifted my eyes to heaven,” NKJV “raised my eyes toward heaven,” NASB and “looked up to heaven.” NLT He went to graze in the field against his will – driven from among men. However, at the conclusion of his judgment, he voluntarily and insightfully looked up into heaven – more precisely, to the “God of heaven” (2:18,19,27,44).

You may recall that Jesus is said to have done this precise thing in the garden: “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven” (John 17:1). This is an act of recognition, and denotes a sense of dependency as well as understanding.

MY UNDERSTANDING RETURNED

“ . . . and mine understanding returned unto me . . . ” Other versions read, “my reason returned unto me,” NASB “my sanity was restored,” NIV “my sense was restored to me,” DOUAY For seven years God took all rationality from the king, and now He had given it back.

I have often pondered how Nebuchadnezzar felt when he suddenly came to himself while grazing in a field. Perhaps it was during the night, when the dew of heaven was heavy upon him. Whenever it was, a sudden transition was made from having no mind to having a clear mind, from having the senses of a beast to being keenly aware of the God of heaven. Perhaps his reason returned to him when he began to look toward the heavens, from whence all help comes. Before this time, he may have pointed toward heaven and howled with the other beasts. But this time his reason returned to him.

I BLESSED THE MOST HIGH

“ . . . and I blessed the most High . . . ” As soon as his reason returned to him, Nebuchadnezzar’s mind went back to the voice he heard just prior to being driven out from men. It appears to me that he was instantly able to associate where he was and how he looked with the message he received from heaven seven years earlier. We understand this to have occurred in the forty-second year of his reign, and approximately 1-2 years before his death.

It seems reasonable to say the king had been cavorting about on all fours, eating grass with the wild beasts, for seven years. But now, it is as though he rose to his full height as a man and looked up into heaven. The brightness of the sun was superceded by the gracious return of his powers of reason. He therefore “blessed God,” from a thankful heart.

The possession of a “sound mind” is something for which God is to be blessed! He experienced what the Gadarene demoniac did when he came to possess - a “right mind” (Mk 5:15). On an even grander scale, he “came to himself” like the prodigal (Lk 15:17). There was only one proper reaction. BLESS GOD! Extol Him, and give Him thanks! And, bless God, the king knew what to say!

I PRAISED AND HONORED HIM

“ . . . and I praised and honored Him that liveth for ever . . . ” Other versions read “honored and glorified,” NIV “praised Him . . . and gave Him glory,” Septuagint and “praised and worshiped.” NLT

Perhaps the beasts of the field heard him – the ones with whom he had been grazing for seven long years. The judgment was over, and Nebuchadnezzar could instantly, rationally, and effectively, give praise and honor to God. Even though he had been out of commission, so to speak, for seven years, he did not need a praise leader to get him started. A person with understanding can move into the praise and honor of God instantly, for such are aware of His Person and power. Only those who lack this perception are tardy in their responses to the Lord.

You will note that at the very instant the king's understanding returned, his praise and honor of God began. It took a while for his hair to look like eagles' feathers. To required a season before his nails looked like the claws of a giant bird. But it did not take long for his tongue to be loosed when understanding was restored to him.

“Praise” and “honor” are similar words, though not identical. Both have to do with the perception of the Person and purpose of God. “Praise” accentuates the adoration of God, while “honor” stresses giving Him glory through articulation.

AN EVERLASTING DOMINION

“ . . . whose dominion is an everlasting dominion . . . ” Other versions read, “His dominion is an eternal dominion,” NIV “His sovereignty is an everlasting sovereignty,” NRSV “His power is an everlasting power,” DOUAY “whose rule is an eternal rule,” BBE and “His empire is an everlasting empire.” NJB

The dominion of God included Babylon. His Sovereignty was over the Chaldeans. His power was over the Assyrian empire. His rule included the vast area over which Nebuchadnezzar was king. His empire included Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar and his armies! There is no place or time, past, present, or future, in which God does not have absolute and total dominion. Every other form of authority is under Him, answerable to Him, and dominated by Him. It is in this sense that we read, “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36).

When it comes to adversarial or heathen powers, whether Satan, principalities and powers, or some form of human government, God disposes of them at will. When, for example, His purposes for the world have been fulfilled, and we embark on “the ages to come,” God will simply take the devil, his hosts, and every form of wicked influence, and cast them into the lake of fire (Rev 10:10). It will happen as suddenly and incontrovertibly as Nebuchadnezzar being driven away from human society. Of course, in that case, no one will recover as Nebuchadnezzar did. However, and make no mistake about this, if the God of heaven had not willed for the king of Babylon to recover, there is no possible way that a recovery could have been effected.

All of that, and more, is involved in God's “dominion” being an “everlasting dominion.”

HIS KINGDOM FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

“ . . . and His kingdom is from generation to generation . . . ” The Kingdom of God IS, and in all of history there was never a time when it was not. When we read of His Kingdom coming (Matt 6:10; Mark 9:1; 12:28; Luke 10:9), or being “at hand” (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Luke 21:31), we are reading of the revelation of the Kingdom, and not the Kingdom itself.

There is no generation over which the God of heaven does not preside. There are no time-gaps in His Kingdom, no generation that has been strictly on its own. Even a reprobate generation like that of Noah’s day found that “the heavens do rule” (Matt 24:39). The energetic builders in a plain in the land of Shinar found that God is “over all” (Gen 11:2-9). The defiled cities of Sodom and Gomorrah found out that God’s “dominion” was in their generation also (Gen 19:25,29).

Candidly, I do not know why more of this is not declared in the contemporary church. To many, this is a first-time message. Such things ought not to be, Rest assured, the dominion of God has extended into our generation, and prevails at this time. It took seven years in the field, deprived of all reason, for Nebuchadnezzar to learn this. Those in Christ can learn it more fully and profitably, being given many details about the reign of God through Christ Jesus. Furthermore, the knowledge of His dominion and kingdom generates strong hope in the heart of the believer.

THE INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH FROM HEAVEN’S VIEW

“ 35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?”

It is possible for a person to speak highly of God, but simply do it by rote. Or intellectual; mechanics – like reciting a speech, or answering a test question. But that is not how Nebuchadnezzar is speaking. He is speaking from the well of understanding, not the broken cistern of memory. His words are the result of Divine learning, or enlightenment, not an pedantic process.

The words now confessed by Nebuchadnezzar ought to be most common within the church – but they are not. I know from experience that many are unable to frame these words, or say them without an elaborate explanation of what they do NOT mean.

You must aggressively push such notions from you. Nebuchadnezzar did speak these words, but they are as surely inspired by God as anything could possibly be. There is no way the king of Babylon could have known these things, or have been able to put them into words, apart from the inspiration of the Almighty. Further, the Holy Spirit would not have allowed these words to be written in Scripture if they were not precisely correct.

Remember, Nebuchadnezzar is proclaiming these words throughout the entire world. This is one reason God raised him up, and seven years in the open field has prepared him to say these words with power and conviction.

REPUTED AS NOTHING

“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing . . .” Other versions read, “are accounted as nothing,” NASB “are regarded as nothing,” NIV and “count for nothing.” NJB Here a comparison is being made with God Himself, who has the dominion and owns the kingdom. The king does not make a comparison with himself and God. Nor, indeed, does he group himself with all of the nobles of Babylon and make the comparison. He takes all of the inhabitants of the world together. He gathers them from all ages, and puts them on the Divine scales together.

And what is the result of placing all “the inhabitants of the earth” on the scales with God Almighty? The scales do not even move! Together, earth’s inhabitants as are a weightless mote of dust! Their combined names are nothing, Their united power is nothing. Their aggregate will is nothing.

Isaiah said it this way, “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing , and vanity” (Isa 40:15-17).

Hear the prophet again as he declares one of the heavenly perspectives of humanity. “It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: That bringeth the princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and He shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither , and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble” (Isa 40:22-24).

On yet another occasion, the Lord told Isaiah to cry out. When Isaiah asked what he should shout out, God told him precisely what to say. “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field : The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass . The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the Word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa 40:6-8).

When, therefore, we speak of the dignity of man, it is only within the purpose of God that such dignity exists. Apart and alienated from God, man obtains no significance whatsoever. If there is any goodness in him, it is because of the grace of God (1 Cor 15:10).

Remember, we are viewing “the inhabitants of the earth” in comparison to the mighty God of heaven. If you were to assign a numeric value to every personality from Adam to the end of the world, giving that number according to inherent worth, the sum total of humanity would be “0” – nothing! They were all created by God and are answerable to God. They can cause nothing that will endure, and cannot change one jot or tittle that the Lord has spoken. All of them have been deceived. All of them have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All of them need deliverance. They are together “reputed as nothing.”

HIS WILL IN THE ARMY OF HEAVEN

“ . . . and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven . . . ” Other versions read “the host of heaven,” NASB “the powers of heaven,” NIV “the forces of the heavens,” YLT and “the angels of heaven.” NLT

Elsewhere this amalgamation of heavenly personalities is called “the host of heaven.” Micaiah the prophet saw them all standing on the right and left hand of God Almighty (1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chron 18:18). Nehemiah affirmed this vast host worshiped the Lord (Neh 9:6). When Jesus was born, a multitude of these hosts were heard praising God (Lk 2:13). No less than two-hundred and forty-four times God is referred to as “the LORD of hosts” (ex, 1 Sam 1:3; 2 Sam 6:2; 1 Kgs 18:15; 2 Kgs 19:31; 1 Chron 11:9; Psa 24:10; Isa 1:9; Jer 6:6; Micah 4:4; Nahum 2:13; Hab 2:13; Zeph 2:9; Hag 1:1; Zech 1:3; Mal 1:13). Isaiah mentions this phrase fifty-three times, Jeremiah seventy-one times, Zechariah fifty-three times, and Malachi twenty-four times. The book of Haggai contains only 38 verses, yet refers to “the LORD of hosts” fourteen times.

There is a vast sea of personalities in the heavenly realms. They include cherubim (Psa 80:1) – mentioned sixty-four times in Scripture, seraphim (Isa 6:2,6), arch-angels (1 Thess 4:16), living creatures (Rev 4:6), an innumerable company of angels (Heb 12:22), and principalities and powers (Eph 3:10).

These all do the bidding of the Lord. They were present at Sinai, and even spoke the Law (Deut 33:2), and one slew Sennacherib’s army of 185,000 (2 Kgs 19:35). An angel went before Israel to drive the inhabitants out of Canaan (Ex 33:2). Two of this number utterly destroyed Sodom and the cities of the plain (Gen 19:1-15). Some of this number are charged with the care of little ones (Matt 18:10). The entire body of holy angels are charged with ministering to those who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb 1:13-14).

This illimitable host is for the saints and against the wicked. They will pluck up the wicked from the earth at once, and gather all of the saints to be joined forever with the Lord. They are, in every sense, an “army,” and with one heart they do the will of God. He alone can marshal them, send them, order them, and command their attention. It is good they are for the saints!

We all do well to be more mindful of this remarkable multitude of spirits than puny man, “whose breath is in his nostrils” (Isa 2:22).

HIS WILL AMONG THE INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH

“ . . . and among the inhabitants of the earth . . . ” God also has His will among “the peoples of the earth.” NIV As in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, that will can be imposed upon men – but it will be done . When Jesus instructed us to pray for the will of the Lord to be done on earth, He was speaking the manner in which it was done: “as it is in heaven.” That involves willingness on the part of earth’s inhabitants. But whether they are willing or not, the will of the Lord will be done. It may involve giving Nebuchadnezzar the heart of a beast, causing Pharaoh and his armies to be overthrown, or striking Herod dead – but it will be done!

God does desire to show mercy, which is His preference. But if men will not receive that mercy, they will be the victims of God’s will, not its beneficiaries.

When it comes to the clash of the human will with the will of God, let none be so foolish as to imagine God will not prevail! That is the sense of our text. In the end, someone’s will must prevail. A state of conflict between the Divine will and the opposing will of man cannot continue.

In the end, all opposing desires will be violently cast down, and the will of God alone will be left standing. He has His will among the inhabitants of the earth. It only remains for us to be in accord with that will. God be praised for a glorious Gospel that provides a means for us to be “willing in the day of His power” (Psa 110:3)! In a way, considering the rudimentary knowledge Nebuchadnezzar had, it is remarkable that he saw this truth. Yet, from another perspective, considering the extent to which God has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus, it is even more remarkable that it is so little known in our day!

NONE CAN STAY HIS HAND

“ . . . and none can stay His hand . . . ” Other versions read, “No one can restrain His hand,” NKJV “No one can ward off His hand,” NASB “No one can hold back His hand,” NIV “there is none who shall withstand His power,” Septuagint , and “No one can stop Him.” NLT

It is true that Moses so moved God as to delay the punishment of the unbelieving and wicked Israelites (Ex 32:1-14). Even in this case, Moses himself did not stay the judgment, but did so by

appealing to God's nature, and His good promise to Abraham.

However, our text is not speaking of that type of circumstance. Rather, it is referring to Divine determinations that are, as it were cast in stone. Once the determined Word of God goes out for judgment or for blessing, none can turn that decree aside. Whom God has blessed cannot be cursed, and whom God has cursed cannot be blessed. As corrupt as Balaam was, even he knew this (Num 23:19-23).

When God sent the flood, it was not possible for any to resist it. When the Lord caused the work at Babel to cease, no person or group of persons could keep it going. When God delivered Israel from Egypt, it was not possible for that deliverance to be stopped. When God gave Goliath to David, none could stay His hand. When He set Himself against Sihon and Og, it was not possible for them to stand. When He decreed that Nebuchadnezzar overthrow Judah and take the people captive, no one could stop it from happening. When He sent His Son into the world, none could thwart it. And, when, in the end, Jesus sends the angels to gather out the wicked and bring the sons to glory, it simply will not be possible to interfere with that work. None can stay His hand!

NONE CAN SAY "WHAT DOEST THOU?"

“ . . . or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” Other versions read, “What have you done?” NKJV “What are you doing?” NRSV and “What do you mean by doing these things?” NLT

This is what Isaiah would call “striving with your Maker” (Isa 45:9). Such questions are foolish, and provoke the Lord, for He does not give account of any of His matters (Job 33:13). This is equivalent to Moses' expression, “the secret things belong unto God” (Deut 29:29). Paul would say it this way, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?” (Rom 11:34).

I realize it has become quite fashionable these days to say one is angry or upset with God. But it is most foolish to speak in this manner. Solomon warned men of speaking foolishly before an angel. “Do not let your speech cause you to sin and do not say in the presence of the messenger of God that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry on account of your voice and destroy the work of your hands?” (Ecl 5:6). If this is true of God's messenger, how much more of God Himself?

When the text states no one can say to God, “What are You doing?” it does not mean these words cannot erupt from man's mouth. Rather, it means such responses are never legitimate and are always in vain . Man is to yield to the will of God, not question it!

A FINAL WORD ON THIS

Although I have made mention of this once before, I again want to declare how this type of teaching is not found in the church-circles in which I traveled. With the exception of my good father, I

have heard very few men declare this aspect of God with power. During our times, the situation has become much worse. Whole congregations are being fed with miserably meager spiritual diets. The bent of the preaching and teaching is leaving the people thinking more of their circumstances than of God's Person and purpose. I am going to wax bold and say that the preaching of our day is responsible for the fallen state of the church. It is no wonder people often lack a strong faith. They hear precious little about the One in whom their faith is to be placed. Consequently, at best, they have "little faith" and "slow hearts."

What Nebuchadnezzar found so difficult to learn is quickly and pleasantly learned at the feet of Jesus. The Gospel of Christ contains infinitely more than Nebuchadnezzar's dream or what he learned at the end of seven long years. Nebuchadnezzar's knowledge was like the border of the promised land. In Christ Jesus we come into the heart of land, where rich and satisfying fruits are found. Be discontent if you have less understanding of God than Nebuchadnezzar did! You have been given more, and God expects more from you.

Rest assured, if God wanted Nebuchadnezzar to know what he has just confessed, it is profitable to you also. This is an aspect of His Person concerning which we dare not be ignorant. It is something all the world must know.

THE RETURN OF THE KING'S REASON

" 36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me."

All of this marvelous change began when Nebuchadnezzar looked up to heaven. In a moment of time he went from looking at grass to looking up to heaven. His heart went from that of a senseless beast, to one of high reasoning, the likes of which precious few men had seen at that time. This is the fulfillment of Daniel's interpretation, "And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule" (4:26).

In this we have a singular display of the mercy of our God. You sense that Nebuchadnezzar saw something of this mercy, and we do well to see it also. You will find precious few heathen kings that recovered from Divine judgment. Search and see. Pharaoh (Ex 14:28), Sihon (Num 21:21-35), Og (Num 21:33-35), Arad (Num 21:1-3), Agag (1 Sam 15:8,33), Sennacherib (Isa 37:37-38), and Herod (Acts 12:22-23) – they all went down in shame and defeat, and did not recover. Nebuchadnezzar did!

MY REASON RETURNED UNTO ME

“At the same time my reason returned unto me . . .” Other versions read, “my sanity was restored,” NIV “my sense returned to me,” DOUAY and “understanding returned unto me.” DARBY

Here Nebuchadnezzar appears to repeat what he had said previously: “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me ” (4:34). Now he says, “At the same time my reason returned unto me.” He said this, no doubt, to ensure the multitudes hearing his proclamation that it was not a rash or fearful outburst. This was a word framed by an understanding heart, not a manipulated vassal. Also, however, it seems to me that the king’s understanding was being enhanced. First and preeminently, understanding was given to him in order to properly assess the God of heaven. Then, and only then, would he receive wisdom to once again administer his kingdom , for that is what immediately follows.

I cannot imagine the exhilaration of Nebuchadnezzar at the return of his understanding. For one made in the image of God to be deprived of understanding is a most severe judgment. To receive it back again is a most wonderful mercy. No doubt the former demoniac of Gadera experienced similar feelings of joy and freedom.

THE GLORY OF MY KINGDOM

“ . . . and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honor and brightness returned unto me . . . ” Other versions read, “And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom” NASB and “my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom.” NIV

In my judgment, the real sense of this text is better captured by some of the more free translations. “I came to the honor and glory of my kingdom: and my shape returned to me ,” DARBY and “I came to the honor of my kingdom; and my natural form returned to me.” Septuagint In a sense, Nebuchadnezzar was reborn. The long hair like eagles’ feathers, the nails that were like birds claws, and other beastly aspects of his person went away, and the majestic appearance he had as a king returned. Some of his beastly features were apparently developed over a long period, but they went away suddenly. His new appearance, strictly speaking, was not the result of special grooming, but of special grace. The same Divine hands that had wounded him, made him whole. As it is written, “I wound and I heal” (Deut 32:29).

This was in order to the restoration of the glory of his kingdom, which had remained in tact during his exile by the decree of God. It would be uncomely for a majestic kingdom to be administered by one who appeared as a beast of the field. Therefore, because Nebuchadnezzar had learned the intended lesson, his comeliness was restored. He looked like a king!

MY COUNSELORS AND MY LORDS

“ . . . and my counselors and my lords sought unto me . . . ” Other versions read, “resorted to me,”

NKJV “began seeking me,” NASB and “sought me out.” NIV

What a marvelous act of mercy is revealed in this verse. Ordinarily, deprived of their leader for seven years, politicians would consider themselves released from the cause of restraint. They might have formed some sort of conspiracy, and taken the kingdom for themselves, as Absalom was wont to do. But this did not happen. This is why the king’s dream included a solemn decree to leave the stump and its roots, binding it with a band of iron and brass. Keeping the kingdom in tact involved subduing ambitious thoughts, and seeing to it that opportunists did not arise. All of this was the working of the Lord, who can turn men’s hearts like a river of water (Prov 21:1).

Note, the king did not resort to the counselors and nobles to be caught up on the affairs of the kingdom. Rather, they sought him. Remember, the king was “driven from among men.” Perhaps, beholding the madness of the king, some of these men did the driving. However, it appears to me that they had actually maintained the kingdom in keeping with Nebuchadnezzar’s known desires. Now, they return to him, showing their allegiance to him, and making themselves subject to him. All of this was of the Lord.

Surely a God who can do such things is worthy of our trust. He is able to so order our lives as to be a blessing. We do well to live by faith and walk in the Spirit. In Christ God is more kindly disposed toward men than He was, even to Nebuchadnezzar. Believe that!

ESTABLISHED IN MY KINGDOM

“ . . . and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.” Other versions read, “so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me,” NASB “and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before ,” NIV and “I was reestablished over my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me.” NRSV

Thus Nebuchadnezzar did not simply resume where he left off. Now that He knew the Most High ruled in the kingdoms of men, his kingdom was enhanced, expanded, and obtained even more glory. The word of Bildad the Shuite was fulfilled in king Nebuchadnezzar: “thy latter end should greatly increase.” He had the same experience as Job, “So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning” (Job 42:12). As with Israel, the Lord humbled the king “that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end” (Deu 8:16). The saying of Solomon, another king with whom God dealt, came to pass in the king of Babylon. “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof” (Eccl 7:8). This also is A Divine manner, and is to be duly noted by All believers.

We are not provided the details of Nebuchadnezzar’s latter glory. In fact, with the exception of Daniel’s words to Belshazzar in the next chapter, this is the last we hear of Nebuchadnezzar in all of the Bible. The purpose of his record is not to comment on the greatness of his kingdom, as men are wont to do. Rather, it is to reveal the greatness of God, who dealt so graciously with him.

HONORING THE LORD

“ 37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.”

The attention of Nebuchadnezzar has certainly been arrested! The last time we heard him speaking, he was boasting about what he thought he had done. But he is not doing that now – not now that he has understanding, and sees the truth about the Lord. The theme of his speech has turned from himself to the One who made, chastened, and restored him.

PRAISE, EXTOL, AND HONOR

“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor . . .” Other versions read “praise, exalt, and honor,” NASB “praise, exalt, and glorify,” NIV “praise, magnify,” and glorify,” DOUAY and “worship, praise, and honor.” BBE

You sense these are words pregnant with meaning. Yet, their meanings are not within precisely defined borders, but seem to spill over into one another, like great streams of truth emptying themselves into one majestic ocean. There is some redundancy in the words, but it is meaningful redundancy, and not vain repetition.

The word “praise” emphasis adoration – being captured, as it were, by the beauty of the Lord. “Extol” places the stress on exaltation – making the Lord known above all other things – even above His own works: lifting Him up, and bringing Him to the attention of men. “Honor” accentuates glorifying God, or declaring the aspects of His Person that He has revealed.

This is the language of a person who has seen the Lord as over all. Self glory has been swallowed up by the glory of the Lord, and in His Divine light lesser lights are seen more clearly (Psa 36:9). The Lord is the theme of his talk!

THE KING OF HEAVEN

“ . . . the King of heaven . . .” There is a King in heaven – one who rules in heaven, who is “over all.” He is Sovereign: that is, there is no place where His rule is not applicable, and no competitors that can question or nullify it.

As you might suppose, a King in heaven is quite different from a king on earth, for “the heavens do rule” (Dan 4:26).

God is referred to as “King” numerous times in Scripture. David referred to Him as “my King and my God” (Psa 5:2). Four times He is called “the King of glory” (Psa 24:7,8,9,20). He sits “forever” as a “King” (Psa 29:10).

But this is not David, the “sweet Psalmist of Israel” speaking. This is not one of the holy prophets, speaking to the people of God. This is a king of Babylon, a heathen, who has spent seven years under the rod of God. There is not the slightest ambiguity in his words. He does not stammer, stutter, or speak haltingly. He seems to speak with more authority concerning the Living God than many who wear the very name of Jesus. Hear what he has to say! He has been taught by God, and God can teach you more in Jesus than He ever taught Nebuchadnezzar.

WHOSE WORKS ARE TRUTH

“ . . . all whose works are truth . . . ” Other versions read, “all His works are true,” NASB “everything He does is right,” NIV and “all His works are right.” RSV Nothing God does is inconsiderate, unfair, unjust, or without proper reason. He never acts out of caprice, or with improper motives. His anger does not flash out uncontrollably, and His mercy is always extended thoughtfully and with sound purpose. To question God, therefore, is a sin of the greatest magnitude. It is the opposite of extolling God, and the antithesis of praising Him. The psychiatrists may tell men they are doing the natural thing when they are upset with God, or question what He is doing. But that is not the truth. Such responses are actually murmurings, like those of the children of Israel. Preachers and teachers should remind the people “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer” (1 Cor 10:10).

Keep in mind, this a man who has just spent seven years in the open field with wild beasts. He has eaten grass for that entire period, during which his hair grew long like an eagles’ feathers, and his nails became long and sharp like the claws of a bird. He had been deprived of his mind, his kingdom, and his comely appearance. See how he speaks when he is of sound mind! He says what God has done is right. No doubt he will be called to the witness stand in the day of judgment to condemn those who had so much more than he, yet still did not come to the right conclusion about God.

HIS WAYS ARE JUDGMENT

“ . . . and His ways judgment . . . ” Other versions read, “His ways justice,” NKJV “His ways just,” NASB “all His ways are just,” NIV and “all His ways are right.” NJB

This is not a mere repetition of the previous thought. His WORKS are true , His WAYS are just ! This is almost exactly what Moses said: “His work is perfect, for His ways are judgment” (Deut 32:4). There is a difference between the works of God and the ways of God. His works are WHAT He does, His

ways are WHY He does them. The closer a person is to the Lord, the more he can learn of His ways. The more we know of His ways, the more sense we make of His works. His ways are the foundation of His works.

The Psalmist expressed it beautifully. “He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel” (Psa 103:7). Israel saw WHAT the Lord did. Moses understood WHY He did it. This is precisely why Moses could effectively intercede for Israel. He knew God’s ways. That is another way of saying He comprehended God Himself. You may recall that God showed Moses His glory. He caused “all” of His goodness to pass before Moses, and expounded His glorious Person to His servant (Ex 33:18-19; 34:5-7).

The wonder of our text is that something of God’s ways and works had been revealed to Nebuchadnezzar – a heathen – and Nebuchadnezzar had not asked for such a revelation . What person, therefore, could possibly come to the conclusion that God cannot be more fully known by those who have believed the record He has given of His Son?

THOSE WHO WALK IN PRIDE

“ . . . and those that walk in pride . . . ” Walking in pride is living with an inflated notion of self. It is conducting one’s life as though there was no God, no Divine will, no appointed purpose for human life. From the heavenly perspective, pride is the epitome of ignorance. Man was made by God, and everything he possesses was obtained from God.

In spite of the fact that all men live in God’s world, with the resounding testimony of God’s eternal power and Godhead sounding in their ears, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). The devil has “deceived the whole world” (Rev 12:9), and all are “by nature children of wrath” (Eph 2:1-3). The ONLY people who are no longer in this category are those who have been delivered, or saved, by Jesus. He is the One who defeated their enemy. He is the One who reconciled them to God. God is the One who put them in Jesus, and washed them from their sins. What possible reason can be adduced for “walking in pride?”

You see how utterly foolish it is to “walk in pride.” If such a walk is out of order for a king God called a “head of gold,” the most illustrious of all worldly rulers, how much more is it completely wrong for any of us!

HE IS ABLE TO ABASE

“ . . . He is able to abase.” And what will God do with those who “walk in pride,” whose heads are lifted higher than they ought to be? Eventually, all of them will be “abased,” “humbled,” NIV or “brought low.” NRSV The universal humbling will take place when the Lord Jesus appears in all of His glory. There will certainly be no boasting then.

In the meantime, God is fully able to “abase” the prideful one at a time – just like He did Nebuchadnezzar. At one time, I suppose, Nebuchadnezzar could not conceive of this being possible. After all, he was the king of all the world. Massive armies and other resources were at his command. He appeared secure enough, having been in his position for more than four decades. That would be like being the President of the United States for ten full terms. Yet, in a solitary hour, that very king was brought low! He descended from the height of the throne of Babylon to the open fields, naked, and at the mercy of the elements. In a single hour he went from feasting on Babylonian dainties to eating grass with wild beasts. God KNOWS how to “abase” those who “walk in pride.”

He can tailor the abasement so it will yield good knowledge to the one who once walked in pride. Then, he can move that humbled person to declare how he was humbled to the entire world through a proclamation that will be read. The Lord knows HOW to abase those who walk in pride.

And, He is ABLE to accomplish this abasement. He does not have to ask permission to do it, appeal to a human council, or have the consent of the one He will abase. Men may boast of their free will, free moral agency, volitional freedom, and the likes. But when God sets out to abase someone, of what value is all of that supposed freedom? Where is the right of choice then? See, God is ABLE to bring low those who walk in pride.

A FINAL OBSERVATION

As you read this text, you get a keen sense of Nebuchadnezzar’s acute consciousness of God. In a few moments he has gone from concentrating on grass to contemplating God! In the expressions following the return of his understanding (vs 34-37), his references to the Lord are most remarkable.

- “The Most High.”
- “Him that liveth for ever.”
- “Whose dominion is an everlasting dominion.”
- “His kingdom is from generation to generation.”
- “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven.”
- “He doeth according to His will among the inhabitants of earth.”
- “None can stay His hand.”

- “None can say unto Him, What doest Thou?”
- “The King of heaven.”
- “Whose works are truth.”
- “Whose ways are judgment.”
- “Those who walk in pride He is able to abase.”

Is it possible that this Babylonian king learned more about the Living God than you? You are not living in the blazing glory of the exalted Son of God. He is the “Sun of righteousness,” who has risen “with healing in His wings” (Mal 4:2). He has come as the Divinely appointed Expositor of God Himself. He comes to show us the Father, and to take us to Him as well. How do you suppose it will be for those on the day of judgment who lived and died with less of an understanding of God than Nebuchadnezzar of old – even though they lived during great illumination?

CONCLUSION

You must remember that this account, like all Scriptural accounts, was “written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor 10:11). It has been “written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4). Like all of Scripture, it is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16-17). Consider the treasures of wisdom and knowledge that have been opened in this fourth chapter of Daniel.

- God works powerfully toward individuals (4:3).
- His signs are great (4:3a).
- His wonders are mighty (4:3b).
- His kingdom is everlasting (4:3c).
- His dominion is from generation to generation (4:3d).
- He can arrest the attention of a person on his bed (4:5).
- He can confirm the absolute poverty of worldly wisdom (4:7).
- He can confirm the superiority of heavenly wisdom (4:8).
- He can move a king to precisely know the dream He gave to him (4:10-17).
- He can dry up human wisdom, so that the meaning of God’s message must be derived from another

(4:18-19).

- God sees the details of pride (4:20-23).
- He can instantly remove one from people, isolating him (4:25).
- He can deprive men of understanding (4:16, 25).
- Flesh forgets what God has revealed (4:29-30).
- God does not forget what He has declared (4:31).
- The Lord can instantly move a person from the peak of power to the depths of depravity (4:33).
- He can make a person more like the beasts of the earth than like men (4:33).
- He can restore lost years, and recover those He has abased (4:34-37).
- As compared with the King of heaven, all humanity put together is nothing (4:35a).
- God does according to His will in the army of heaven (4:35b).
- God does according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth (4:35c).
- No one can hold back the hand of God (4:35d).
- No one can question what God does (4:35e).
- All of God works are done in truth (4:37a).
- All of God's ways are just and right (4:37b).
- God is able to abase those who walk in pride (4:37c).

And to think, God so moved the King of Babylon that he proclaimed this throughout the entire world! Perhaps the Gentile world is not really innocent!

The Prophecy of Daniel

BELSHAZZAR IS BROUGHT DOWN BECAUSE HE DID NOT LEARN

Lesson #16

INTRODUCTION

I have mentioned before that accounts of Scripture that are generally familiar to people tend to be glossed. By “generally familiar,” I mean accounts that are commonly known. Unless a person has a love for the truth, and a lives by every Word of God, he will be tempted to regard such accounts with a minimum of interest. One of the effects of sin is the dreadful propensity to fleshly curiosity – like the Athenians and Stoics, delighting to hear “some new thing” (Acts 17:21). All too often, an attitude accompanying this frame of mind is the assumption that things already introduced to the intellect have been grasped by the heart. It is imperative that we thrust such an posture from our thinking, for it will

rob our souls.

For that very reason, we should not expect that things we have heard from our youth are clear to our understanding. Also, care must be taken not to regard them as children's stories, as though they had nothing of value for those who are mature. The Word of God is to be taught to children, but it was not written for children.

No word of God is without significance. No record of God's dealings among the sons of men is incidental. Divine interpositions have always had succeeding generations in prospect, as well as those who experienced the events themselves. Circumstances like that of our text actually happened for our instruction, and were written for our learning. Thus it is written, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor 10:11). Again it is written, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom 15:4).

From the Divine point of view, history is deliberate – orchestrated so as to bring instruction to the sons of men. For this reason, Scripture is not a mere chronological history of the world. Rather, it is a record of God's deliberate dealings among men – transactions that paved the way for the introduction of the Savior.

THE RECORD BEFORE US

The record before us provides the details of the fall of Babylon – the most illustrious of all world empires. This fall was prophesied previously and repeatedly.

- DAVID . "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." (Psa 137:8-9)
- ISAIAH. "The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. . . . Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it . . . Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it . . . And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah . . . and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged." (Isa 13:1-22; 14:4-26; 21:1-10; 46:1-24; 47:1-15; 48:14-20)
- JEREMIAH. "And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath

prophesied against all the nations.” (Jer 25:12-13)

“The word that the LORD spake against Babylon and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.” (Jer 50:1-16)

“Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind; And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about.” (Jer 51:1-64)

- DANIEL. “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.” (Dan 2:37-39)
- HABUKKUK. “For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.” (Hab 1:6-11)

Now, the time has come for these prophecies to be fulfilled. The kingdom of Babylon will fall, just as the Lord has said it would.

A POINT TO PONDER

There are some who are persuaded those in the favor of God can never fall out of that favor. The demise of Nebuchadnezzar and the fall of Babylon confirm the folly of such reasoning.

Nebuchadnezzar was the “servant” of God (Jer 27:6). The Lord gave him a kingdom, power, strength, and glory (Dan 2:37). The nations of the world, and even the beasts of the field were given to him (Jer 27:5-7; Dan 2:38). Babylon is called “a golden cup in the Lord’s hand” (Jer 51:7).

Yet, all of this was taken from Nebuchadnezzar. And now, Babylon itself will fall, even though it was a golden cup in the Lord’s hand. It is no wonder that those in Christ are admonished, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). Theologies that cast men into a

state of spiritual slumber are all about us. It is our business to see to it we do not in any way embrace them. The just live by faith, not by privilege and honor.

THE KING MAKES A FEAST AND REVEALS HIS INSOLENCE

“ 5:1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. 3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. 4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.”

Once again, the Spirit rapidly moves over a significant period of time without commenting on its historical details. Although chronology and historical thoroughness are important to some, they are not the hallmarks of revelation. The Spirit has moved holy men to record the workings of the Lord – particularly as they pertain to His “eternal purpose.” In this, incidentals are often omitted.

If men are to be edified by the Scriptures, and if they are to live by every word of them, the Scriptures themselves must have focus, for life cannot be maintained by mere randomness. There is a sort of spiritual highway upon which the Word of God is carried. It is narrow in that it is restricted to Divine intentions and objectives. It is wide in that it reveals the vast scope of the work of the Lord. It is high in that it contains lofty perspectives that make no place for worldly prominence or values. It is deep in that it promotes extended thought and meditation.

Therefore, as we consider the account of Belshazzar, we should not expect him to be the preeminent consideration. In fact, of all of the days of this man, Scripture records only one segment of the last day of his life – nothing more. That is how significant he was in the purpose of God. He was a mere period – not an exclamation point – in the sentence of Babylonian supremacy.

CAUSES AND THE DIVINE MANNER

We will also see that nothing God does is without a cause (Ezek 14:23). As the time draws closer for the appointed demise of the Babylonian kingdom, it will be found in a state of degeneracy. This also is a Divine manner.

- As the time drew near for Israel to be delivered from Egypt, “it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Ex 2:24).
- As the time approached for the conclusion of the Babylonian captivity, “In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes” (Dan 9:2-3).
- When the fulness of time approached, when God would send His Son into the world, there were those “that looked for redemption in Jerusalem” (Luke 2:38)
- When the time came for John to give place to the ministry of Jesus, having prepared the way for Him , “the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not” (Luke 3:15).

Now that the time has arrived for the fall of Babylon, unparalleled spiritual debauchery will break out. God will not bring Babylon down while it is in a state of comeliness, or when it is giving advantages to His people, like Daniel and his three friends.

BELSHAZZAR

“ 5:1a Belshazzar the king . . . ” This chapter is the only place in Scripture that refers to the actions of Belshazzar. Later in this book, Daniel will recall some visions he had during the first and third years of Belshazzar’s reign. “In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.” “In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first” (7:1; 8:1) However, Daniel makes no reference to the king himself in chapters seven and eight.

His Name

The name “Belshazzar” means “Bel (another name for the idol Marduk) has protected the king.” Our text will show how utterly false that name was. The false god Bel could not protect this king for a single second. Historically, we understand Belshazzar was a joint king with his father Nabonidus, yet was subordinate to him.

Technically, a Grandson

Technically, Nebuchadnezzar was his grandfather, although he is referred to as Belshazzar's father in this text (5:2,11,13,18). This is not an unusual manner of Scriptural reference, and we certainly should not balk at the language as some critics of Scripture have done. A few examples will serve to confirm this use of the word "father." In fact, the word "grandfather" does not even occur in the KJV, and only once in the other major versions (2 Sam 9:7). The KJV translates the word "father," as indicated below, which is a proper translation. This word is more closely paralleled with "ancestor" than the ordinary domestic meaning of the word "father."

A few examples will serve to confirm this use of the word "father."

- Jacob referred to both Abraham and Isaac as his "father." "And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, . . ." (Gen 32:9).
- When speaking to Mephibosheth, David referred to Jonathan as his "father," and to Saul (Jonathan's father) as his "father" also (2 Sam 9:7).
- Jews referred to Abraham as their "father." "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Mat 3:9).
- Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah, is also called the son of Ahab's house by marriage. "And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son in law of the house of Ahab" (2 Kgs 8:27).

Nebuchadnezzar's Son's Son

On his prophecy of the fall of Babylon, Jeremiah refers to the duration of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. The final king is referred to as Nebuchadnezzar's "son's son," or, as we would say, grandson (Jer 27:7). Suffice it to say, Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar's grandson in the flesh. However, as regarding the dynasty or paternal view, Nebuchadnezzar was Belshazzar's father.

From the standpoint of history, the immediate successor of Nebuchadnezzar was not Belshazzar, but Evil-Merodach, as noted in 2 Kings 25:27 and Jeremiah 52:31-33. The duration of this man's reign is open to question. Some take the view he reigned for only two years, others as long as thirty years. This son is the one who released Jehoiachin after he had been incarcerated for thirty-seven years (2 Kgs 25:27). This was during the first year of his reign after Nebuchadnezzar's death. Historians generally consider Belshazzar to have reigned for between four to eight years.

What Difference Does It Make?

While all of this may seem quite inconsequential, I do have a point for bringing it to your

attention. This is a point of interest, but contains food for serious thought. Using the most conservative figures, at the time of our text, forty-seven years had passed since Daniel was taken into captivity. Using the larger figures, around seventy-two years had passed since he was taken captive.

To get more to the point, the event we will now review took place at least eleven years after Nebuchadnezzar's humbling experience in the field. It could also have been as long as thirty-eight years after that time. At any rate, it was long enough for men to forget what had happened. However, God will not allow men to forget His great works, and will judge them when they do.

A Brief Thought

Here is a mighty king of Babylon with considerable influence, and a number of subordinates. Yet, from the heavenly perspective the only consideration given to him was his last evening on earth. The ONLY reason he is mentioned is because he was a fitting conclusion to the great Babylonian empire. Otherwise, his name would never have occurred in Scripture.

A FEAST, LORDS, AND WINE

“ 5:1b . . . made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand . . . ” Other versions read, “for a thousand of nobles.” NASB/NIV

The Significance of a Person

The thought has occurred to me that this is the ONLY thing we know Belshazzar did. However long he lived, whatever the length of his reign as king of Babylon, this is heaven's commentary on his life: “he made a great feast.” The only thing the Holy Spirit tells us about this man occurred at this feast. His name is mentioned eight times in Scripture, and two of them have nothing to do with his works, other than the fact that he reigned. Compare that with the Scriptural references to Abraham, “the father of all them that believe.” As “Abram,” he is mentioned fifty-four times. As “Abraham,” he is referred to two hundred and thirty-one times. “Abram's” is mentioned seven times, and “Abraham's” nineteen times. That is three hundred and eleven references to Abraham, as compared with eight to Belshazzar. Further, one hundred years of Abraham's life are covered – from seventy-five to one hundred and seventy-five (Gen 12:4; 25:7). Only a few hours of Belshazzar's life is covered.

The worth of a person is measured by their faith – by their ability and inclination to believe God and lean wholly upon Him. Although men may dispute over the inherent worth of individuals, the Scriptures make no such representation. God did “so love the world” (John 3:16), and provided a Propitiation for “the whole world” (1 John 2:2). That magnanimous display of Divine goodness, however, is consistently traced to His great love and mercy, not the inherent, or constitutional worth of humanity.

When comparing the value of men, we read such statements as, “How much then is a man better than a sheep ?” (Mat 12:12), and “Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows ” (Mat

10:31). Further Divine consideration is also traced to our frailty, not merely our worth. As it is written, “For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust . As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep is covenant, and to those that remember His commandments to do them” (Psa 103:13-18).

This certainly is not intended to produce calloused and insensitive views of people. It is, however, meant to encourage us to obtain godly views of men, and of ourselves as well. There ARE people of whom it is said, “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life” (Isa 43:4). Belshazzar was not such a person – but there is no reason why you cannot be one. Your faith in God and belief of the record He has given of His Son will make you precious in His sight also.

A Thousand of His Lords

Nothing in the text suggests the group for which the feast was prepared included all of the Babylonian nobles. It was for one thousand of them. In order to get a grasp of the size of his empire – and Belshazzar was actually a second ruler – the United States Government has approximately one hundred Senators and four hundred and sixty Representatives. That is, in the language of our text, around five hundred and sixty “nobles” - a little over one half of the number attending the great feast prepared by Belshazzar.

He Drank Wine Before Them

Other versions read, “and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand,” NASB and “and drank wine with them.” NIV The idea here is that the events that follow occurred while Belshazzar and his host were imbibing wine. As some would consider things, that would make the multitude less accountable, for they would not tend to be in full possession of their faculties. However, that is not how heaven will view this revelry. We will also see how Belshazzar had enough presence of mind to conduct himself foolishly, making a decision to do something that no one in Babylon had ever done before. In the act that follows, this wicked king stoops to further depths than Nebuchadnezzar did before him – and heaven will take due notice of his deeds.

BRING THE VESSELS

“Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein . . .”

Somewhere between fifty and seventy years earlier, Nebuchadnezzar took “part of the vessels of the house of God,” and brought them “into the land of Shinar,” putting them in “the house of his God.” The Spirit declares that God “gave” these vessels into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand (Dan 1:2). The Chronicles

declare, “Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon” (2 Chr 36:7). The record of the Kings reads, “And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said” (2 Kgs 24:13). God did NOT do this, however, for the vessels to be desecrated. Rather, this was His way of keeping them safe until they would later be returned to His house in Jerusalem by Cyrus, whom God raised up to rebuild His temple (Ezra 1:7; 5:14).

Now, in an act of obloquy and utter disregard for the name of the Lord, Belshazzar gives “orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, in order that the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them.” NASB He does this while he was “drinking his wine.”

Those who imagine God has no regard for things that have been consecrated to Him, do well to give heed to this account. God is showing Himself to us in this text – unveiling an aspect of His Person of which we cannot afford to be ignorant.

Some have thought Belshazzar was drunk when he gave this order, and that may very well be true. However, his drunkenness will not excuse his behavior before God. He will be held in strict account for his orders. Sin is never excusable or glossed by the Lord. That is involved in the revelation of Himself to Moses: “and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Ex 34:7). Nahum also says, “and will not at all acquit the wicked” (Nah 1:3). It is true, as David confessed, “But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (Psa 130:4). But Divine readiness to forgive (Psa 86:5) makes no provision for ignoring sin, or treating iniquity as though it was inconsequential. If a heathen king, without a covenant with God, takes it upon himself to disrespect the God of heaven, his action will not be ignored.

A Wretched Group

The Spirit mentions the wretched group that were set to desecrate vessels that had been dedicated to the Lord of glory. They included Belshazzar, his nobles, his wives, and his concubines. It appears as though his wives and concubines came in when the revelry began, for the feast had been made for his nobles, not his wives.

DRINKING AND PRAISING

“. . . Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.”

The text before us is most appropriate in a day when a sense of sacred things has all but been obliterated by an insensitive society. The name of the Lord, His great salvation, His word, and His

people are frequently held in disregard. It is not uncommon to hear professed believers jest about holy matters, as though it was superstitious to hold them in high regard. Those who imagine God has no interest in external matters do well to give due heed to this text. In it the “God-loves-you-no-matter-what-you-do” mentality is exposed for the gobbledygook that it is.

They Brought the Vessels

This was a most foolish thing to do, and that will shortly be made quite clear. For the first time since Nebuchadnezzar had placed these holy vessels in the house of his god, they were brought forth. Their original area is specified: “ the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem.”

The pillage of the house of God by Nebuchadnezzar is detailed in the book of Second Kings. What he took from the temple was most significant.

- They broke in pieces the pillars of brass in the house of the Lord, their bases, and the brazen sea (laver), carrying the bronze back to Babylon.
- They confiscated the pots, shovel, snuffers, spoons, and vessels of brass associated with the altar.
- The fire pans, bowls, and such things as were of gold and silver – everything made of pure silver and gold – were taken.
- We are told that the bronze used in the pillars and laver was “beyond measure,” NKJV or “more than could be weighed.”
- Each pillar was eighteen cubits high (twenty-seven feet), and the bronze capital on the top of one of the pillars was three cubits (four and a half feet), with elaborate decorations. The other pillar was similar to it (2 Kings 25:13-17).

To give an idea of the number of vessels that were taken from Jerusalem, Ezra provides an inventory of them when they were returned to their rightful place. “Now this was their number: 30 gold dishes, 1,000 silver dishes, 29 duplicates; 30 gold bowls, 410 silver bowls of a second kind, and 1,000 other articles. All the articles of gold and silver numbered 5,400. Sheshbazzar brought them all up with the exiles who went up from Babylon to Jerusalem” NASB (Ezra 1:9-11).

It was quite possible every person at the feast was provided one of these holy vessels for their night of revelry.

They Drank From Them

Now the vessels that had been dedicated to the Lord were employed for unholy purposes – a drunken feast.

The book of Hebrews refers to these, and other articles, as “vessels of the ministry,” which were sanctified by the blood of the covenant (Heb 9:21). Moses also anointed these vessels with oil, setting them apart for Divine service (Ex 40:9-11; Lev 8:11). These vessels were handled only by the Levites, who had the charge of them (Num 1:50).

But now the king, his nobles, his wives, and his concubines “drank wine” from them. The seriousness of this offense will be seen in God’s judgment against it.

They Praised Their Gods

The sin of Belshazzar is now compounded. It was wicked enough to take the vessels dedicated to the God of heaven, and dare to indulge their fleshly appetites with them. However, while they did so, “They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.”

By praising their false gods, particularly Bel, in whose house the vessels had been retained, this motley Babylonian crew was giving their gods the glory for their victory. Bel, however, had not given these sacred vessels into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Rather, it is written “And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God” (Dan 1:2).

God had also extended the empire of Babylon in the days of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 27:6-7). Now Belshazzar insults the God of heaven. In his mind, he thought nothing of giving glory to his own lifeless gods. However, his insolence will not go unnoticed by the God he is refusing to honor.

There is something of significance to be seen in this text. Drinking wine and drunkenness fit well together as a background for praising gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, and of stone. Such behavior is forthrightly rejected by the true God, but is received by false ones.

It is also worthy of note that the Babylonian gods were made of the same materials contained in the image of Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream: gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Other lifeless materials are added: wood and stone. O, the irony of making god’s of such things.

But there is something else to note. The materials of their gods are listed in a degenerative sequence: gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and finally stone. Just as surely as God’s glory shines brighter and brighter, the glory of false gods grows dimmer and dimmer, until finally they are nothing more than lifeless rocks.

GOD BREAKS INTO THE FEAST

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

Are all things known to God? Does the Lord have interest in isolated events in the earth – events that are private in nature? Indeed, this record confirms “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” NIV (Heb 4:13).

The scene takes place in the king's royal palace, a structure renown for its immensity and excellence. It is a night of revelry – wine-drinking and loud praise to gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. Into this drunken revelry the holy vessels from the house of God Almighty have been brought, and now the heathen crowd is drinking wine from them as they praise their idols. Such blatant mockery will not go unnoticed by heaven.

It is quite true that God does not react to all mockery in this manner. However, this record is designed to teach us the truth about how He regards such profanity. It may appear that man's disdain for the things of God is not duly noted. But that is not the case. Those who desecrate the things of God, or conduct themselves in disdainful ways, “are storing up wrath against” themselves “for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done” (Rom 2:5-6). In the case before us, the judgment comes immediately.

THE SAME HOUR

“ 5a In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand . . . ” Other versions they this occurred “suddenly” NASB/NIV “immediately.” NRSV “in that very hour,” BBE and “at that very moment.” NLT The idea is that as soon as they began to drink wine from the Lord's golden vessels, a Divine intrusion occurred. While their contemptuous hands held vessels dedicated to the Lord, a hand appears, bringing a message.

A whole man does not appear, nor the upper torso of a man, or even the arm of one. Rather, only the fingers of a human hand appeared. Just as surely as “the finger of God” wrote the tables of the Law (Ex 31:18; Deut 9:10), so a Divine message was now delivered to the thoughtless and insolent king of Babylon.

WRITING IN THE KING'S PALACE

“ 5b . . . and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.”

The king had dared to desecrate the vessels of the Lord, now the Lord will desecrate the walls of his palace. On the walls that were filled with splendid images of Chaldaean and idolatrous representations, a supernatural hand began to write. Among all the Babylonian paraphernalia space was found for a special message from God Almighty. It wrote “opposite the lampstand,” NASB so the king could more readily see it. Some feel the hand extended from the lampstand itself. It is as though the light intended to illuminate the banquet hall was now focused on the writing on the wall. God has drawn the attention to His message!

What is more, “the king watched the hand as it wrote .” NIV It was an arresting sight, indeed, and would have a most sobering effect upon him. The king did not spot the writing later, for then it might have been supposed that some mortal had inscribed it on the wall. Rather, Belshazzar saw the fingers of the hand as they wrote words upon the wall.

Make no mistake about this! God is fully capable of getting an individual's attention. He can break through the monotony and routines of life, and cause the individual to focus his attention upon the Lord. He may do it by smiting the firstborn in all of Egypt (Ex 12:29), or driving Nebuchadnezzar into a field, deprived of his mind, and with a beast's heart (Dan 4:33). He can send venomous serpents among a crowd of murmurers (Num 21:6), or a destructive storm where a runaway prophet is asleep in a ship (Jonah 1:4). He may block the wayward path of a person as He did with Balaam (Num 22:27), or strike a persecuting Pharisee down to the ground as He did Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:3). Do not doubt for a moment that God can make Himself known in unquestionable and attention-getting ways.

THE KING SAW, AND WAS CHANGED

“ 6 Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.”

It took no time at all for sobriety to grip the heart and mind of the king. He was instantly alert, fully aware of what was happening, even though he was indulgently drinking wine. There is no record of anyone else being aware of this sign from heaven. It was a message tailored for him, and it appears as though he alone was captured by this vision, though others might well have seen it also.

His Countenance Was Changed

Other versions read, “his face turned pale,” NIB “the color went from the king's face,” BBE and “his face blanched.” NAB The king was not bold now. There was not the faintest presence of humor or

satisfaction seen in his countenance. He was now dominated by fear and confusion , having no choice in the matter at all. The God of heaven, whose vessels he was presently desecrating, had his full attention.

His Thoughts Troubled Him

Thinking can be an asset or a liability, a source of encouragement or a cause for deep concern. Suddenly, the king could think of nothing comforting, nothing joyful, nothing that included the bright prospect of hope. The sight of the writing hand pushed all pleasant thoughts from him. Now his mind became his foe, pummeling him with thoughts that only brought trouble, agitation, and turmoil to him. Now his thoughts were alarming, sending ripples of fear throughout his entire person. A sanctified mind can be like a refreshing well to the believer. However, a troubled mind is like a poisoned spring that will not allow the entrance of anything pleasant or that brings relief. Keep in mind, God has caused this with a single arresting sight.

The Joints of His Loins Were Loosed

Other versions read, “the joints of his hips were loosened,” NKJV “his hip joints were slack,” NASB “his legs gave way,” NIV “his hip joints shook,” NAB and “his limbs gave way.” NRSV

The idea is that his legs no longer supported him. He can no longer stand as a monarch, or rise to his feet demanding respect and honor. God has brought him down, and done so quickly and decisively. At this level of Divine working, there is no difference in natural men. All distinction is superficial.

One short vision of the working of the Lord, and all his strength was gone! We learn from this that men are insolent and disrespectful of the Lord because of what they do NOT, or even CANNOT, see.

His Knees knocked Together

I prefer the strength of the KJV here: “his knees smote one against the other.” It is as though his own body began striking itself, unable to maintain any semblance or dignity or control.

As though in the grip of an overpowering seizure, “his knees began knocking together.” NASB Terror has so gripped him that he has lost all control over his body. He is literally shaking with fear. There is not an ounce of pride in this king now!

In the Lord’s most abbreviated and limited appearances, He is able to completely dissipate all human pride, and cause terror to grip the heart. It is well for us to remember this. It will assist to keep us from being foolish ourselves. It will also bring comfort to us concerning those who spitefully use or persecute us. There is no need for us to be vindictive against our enemies. The Lord can bring them down suddenly and thoroughly. We never need to take matters in our own hands.

FLESH MAKES A VAIN ATTEMPT

“ 7 The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. 8 Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. 9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.”

We will first see that the supernatural hand did not write in the Chaldaean language. The message was therefore not discernible. Someone with greater expertise will have to decipher the writing for the king. It will do him no good to lean to his own understanding on this matter.

BRING IN THE ASTROLOGERS

“ 7a The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers . . . ”

Cried Aloud

Other versions read, “called out,” NIB “called aloud,” NAU “cried out aloud,” DOUAY “call mightily,” YLT and “shouted out.” NAB This was no casual call, but was rather the eruption of fear. It is what the prophet’s of Baal did when they were trying to illicit an answer from their dumb god (1 Kgs 18:28).

To cry “aloud” means to lift up the voice mightily, or with power. He shouted out the order, not willing to allow for any delay. His entire personality had been altered! He no longer had drinking on his mind, much less drinking out of the vessels taken from the house of God.

The Lord does not have to bring men along gradually until their attitudes are changed. He can do so instantly – with something that transcends nature, and something they do not understand.

Bring Them In!

As with Nebuchadnezzar, his first recourse is to the Babylonian wise men. Even at that, he does

not simply call for scholars, or experts in language. Rather he seeks to take hold of a supernatural realm: “the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers.” These are the same classes of men Nebuchadnezzar called in when he had a dream he could not remember (2:2). He called for them again when he had the dream of the mighty tree, that he could remember (4:6-7). Now, Belshazzar calls for this group of dabblers in the dark arts.

This feast started with Belshazzar and his lords, or nobles. Then his wives and concubines were added. Now a host of heathen wise men will be called in. It is as though God was setting the stage for His word to be heard, that all might know the penalty for desecrating what has been dedicated to His service.

An Application

I cannot leave this section without noting the distinction of faith. Faith moves the individual to seek FIRST from God, while the flesh has no capacity to think in this way. If there is a single thing that reveals the spiritual depravity of our times, it is the inclination of professed Christians to seek help first from the flesh. God once chided Israel because they sought help from everyone but Him. “And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God ? for the living to the dead?” (Isa 8:19). The latter phrase means, “Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?” NASB

The church of the Living God should not be anywhere near the position of Belshazzar! The trend of seeking counsel from worldly motivators, financial experts, and the likes, is not innocent. It is a manifestation of the meager diet upon which believers have been fed. Just as surely as Belshazzar was not God-conscious, so we have a modern church on our hands that is largely in the same position. It is not unusual to find churches that put their confidence in board meetings, with little or no thought being given to the Lord and those He has endued with knowledge. This is a sad condition. While it is ordinarily not perceived as a serious matter, heaven views it in a most critical way.

READ THIS AND SHOW ME

“ 7b . . . And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom . . . ”

In a sense, this writing was much like Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream. The message itself was not known, and thus its interpretation was beyond reach. Before a Word of God can be understood, it must first be known what has been said.

Some surmised the writing was in Hebrew, because Daniel was able to read it. I doubt this was the case, however, for if that is true, any Hebrew, or one with knowledge of the Hebrew language could

have been called in to read the words.

A Magnificent Reward Is Offered

To be “clothed in scarlet” was to wear the robes of royalty – to be recognized as having unique privileges. When they mocked Jesus, you will recall, they “put a scarlet robe on Him” (Matt 27:28). The blasphemous church, which usurps the Lord Jesus, is depicted as woman sitting upon a “scarlet beast,” and “arrayed in purple and scarlet color” (Rev 17:3-4).

Having “a chain of gold about his neck,” was also indicative of rank and authority. When Pharaoh exalted Joseph, he “put a gold chain about his neck” (Gen 41:42), which was a symbol of his greatness.

To be made “the third ruler in the kingdom” means the one deciphering the writing would be made the third highest official in the kingdom. Some have questioned why such a person would not be made “second” in the kingdom, as Joseph was (Gen 41:40-44). A number of explanations have been put forward. One is that Belshazzar himself was the first ruler and the queen the next, leaving the next position as a reward. Another explanation is that Belshazzar was a ruler with his immediate father, himself being the second ruler, and leaving only the third position as one he could give. While the second appears the most plausible, the matter is of no great consequence.

THEY COULD NOT DO IT

“ 8 Then came in all the king's wise men: but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.”

One can only imagine the effect of such an offer in our day. There would doubtless be a great eagerness to provide what the king demanded. However, great incentives can bring nothing from the flesh. Nature cannot uncover what has been revealed supernaturally! That ought to be apparent, but to this day, many remain unable to receive it. The flesh profits nothing, and no amount of reward can make it yield what it does not have.

Thus, for the third time in this book, the Babylonian wise men fail the test. They could not tell Nebuchadnezzar his first dream or its interpretation (2:10-11). They could not tell him the meaning of his second dream (4:7). Now, they fail once again, for “they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant.” NIV

Once More

While it may appear redundant, allow me to once again affirm this. It is not possible for the flesh to comprehend what the Lord has said. To put it another way, natural means cannot be employed to uncover the meaning of a supernatural message. This is fundamental to sound spiritual thought.

If this postulate is correct, and I believe it to be beyond all controversy, several things necessarily follow.

- There is no such thing as a hermeneutic , or science of interpretation, that can clarify Scripture.
- It is not possible for spiritual meanings to be rooted in the soil of “the original language ,” or linguistics, philology, or etymology.
- Human logic , however revered, is not capable of unraveling what God has declared.

If this is not true, the following must be concluded.

- None of Christ’s parables would have required interpretation (Matt 13:36; 15:15).
- The prophets would have understood the message they were inspired to declare (1 Pet 1:10-11).
- There would be no need for holy angels, who are wiser than men, to desire to look into the glories of the Gospel (1 Pet 1:12).
- It would not be possible for God to hide His truth from the wise and prudent (Matt 11:25).
- There would be no need to ask for understanding concerning the Scriptures (Psa 119:34,73,125,144, 169).

The God of heaven can so work as to obscure what He Himself has had written in a book. As it is written, “For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, the seers. And the entire vision shall be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, ‘Please read this,’ he will say, ‘I cannot, for it is sealed’” (Isa 29:9-11).

One of the chief reasons for the inordinate popularity of the worldly wise within the church is the near-total absence of a quest to know “the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10). Where men are satisfied with surface views of Scripture they will leave room for those who are wise in this world. But when they sense the importance of a word from God, and that their eternal destiny can hinge on a proper understanding of it, the greater significance will be given to the Spirit of God and those in whom He is evidently at work.

I say this with great caution, yet it does need to be said. Perhaps one of the reasons for the spiritual decline of our times is the judgment of God. It may very well be that He has poured out the

spirit of sleep upon the professed church, just as He did upon Israel. Maybe they do not understand because the Lord will not let them understand. Possibly their love for and alliance to the world has brought this condition upon them. It may be that He has sent a spiritual famine upon the land because of the disregard and lack of love for His Word. As it is written, "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD. And people will stagger from sea to sea, And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it" NASB (Amos 8:12).

If God would not allow Belshazzar to forget the truth to which he was exposed, and do so with impunity, what form of reasoning would lead men to conclude He would allow the church to do so?

TROUBLE, CHANGE, AND ASTONISHMENT

“ 9 Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished. ” Other versions read, “Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed , his face grew even paler , and his nobles were perplexed ,” NASB and “So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale . His nobles were baffled .” NIV

The first thing you must see here is that God was working in a particular way, and would not allow His message to be overlooked or placed to the side. There are times when God allows people to ignore His Word, as with Felix and Agrippa (Acts 24:25; 26:28-31). But there are other times when God will not allow His Word to be buried in neglect, or placed upon the shelf of procrastination. This was such a time.

Thus, the already unsettled king became even more unsettled. He sensed the gravity of the message, even though it had not yet been interpreted to him. He became even more frightened, for he knew this must be a portent of things that were not good. His nobles were also “perplexed,” totally incapable of giving so much as a single word of comfort.

The writing of four words upon the wall had completely dried up the well of human wisdom. A dominating sense of futility swept over the entire court of the king. Within that palace there was not a solitary person who could give a single word to alleviate the fear and astonishment that suddenly fell upon that reveling crowd.

The God of the Hebrews had invaded the great palace of Babylon. Without an army or sound, he had caused their pride to melt, their fear to rise, and a sense of utter helplessness take hold of them. One minute they were drinking and praising their gods. The next minute, they were sitting fearful and dumbfounded. We do well to exercise ourselves to avoid such an experience! It is possible to effectively learn from this very record.

THE QUEEN REMEMBERS, AND DANIEL IS CALLED

“ 10 Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: 11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; 12 Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

God is at work in the heathen palace, fulfilling His good pleasure amidst a group of reveling heathen. In the midst of their drinking and praising gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, He will so orchestrate the affairs, that His own man will be summoned to the feast. It is a man who has apparently been forgotten by many, yet the memory of one will be stirred up about that man. The queen will speak to the king like Pilate's wife spoke to him. God will give her words that will be appropriate for the occasion. She will be moved to speak truthfully about Daniel, and in a way that will constrain the king to call for him.

Do not think for a moment that God has ceased to work in this manner. He still can work in the midst of unlikely situations to make His will known.

BY REASON OF THE WORDS

“ Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house . . . ” Other versions read, “The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles,” NASB “The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall,” NIV “The queen, when she heard the discussion of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall,” NRSV “But when the queen mother heard what was happening , she hurried to the banquet hall,” NLT and “When the queen, attracted by the noise made by the king and his noblemen, came into the banqueting hall.” NJB

You get the impression that things had fallen apart at the feast. Confusion, mingled with fear, had erupted in cries of perplexity, and the queen heard about it. Behold how God is bringing things together. First, the king has his nobles come to the feast. Then his wives and concubines join the gala affair. Next all of the wise men are brought to the palace. And now, the queen also makes an entrance. The Lord is orchestrating events for the appearance of His man, Daniel, who will declare words that will be passed to succeeding generations. These will be words that will bring comfort to those who are

afflicted, and sobriety to those who dare to tamper with the things of God. They will unveil the temporality of the most illustrious worldly empires, confirming that it is “The Most High” that rules amidst the sons of men.

THERE IS A MAN

“ . . . and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed . . . ”

The queen suggests this is not the time to be troubled or to tremble, but to listen. A message has been delivered to the king, and it is vital that he hear what it has to say. All of his nobles must hear it also, as well as his wives and concubines. Her words also suggest the king should not think the words cannot be interpreted to him. Although the most significant of all of Babylon’s wise men had not the remotest notion of their meaning, all was not hopeless. She had been sitting, so to speak, on a choice bit of knowledge that had suddenly become relevant.

There Is A Man In The Kingdom

“There is a man in thy kingdom . . . ” Right there, in his own kingdom, and under his nose, so to speak, there was a man suited for the hour. The king had not thought of him. His nobles had apparently forgotten all about him. His wives and concubines had no thoughts of him. But the queen knew about him, and the events of the evening brought him to her attention.

It is the nature of the unregenerate to forget the people of God until the hour of crisis. During the normalities of life, they are pushed back into the recesses of the mind, with no thought of them being helpful. However, godly people are to be considered a resource when things are going well. In fact, honest consultation with them will help men avoid many crises and trying times.

Light, Understanding, and Wisdom

“ . . . in whom is the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him . . . ”

Thus the queen informs the flushed and fearful king there is a man in his very kingdom who has access to supernatural knowledge. He is not a mere scholar, as ordinarily conceived. His true expertise is not found in his knowledge of the language and literature of the Chaldeans, although he did have such knowledge (1:4). This is not a noted linguist, or a specialist in foreign writing. The task of interpreting the message on the wall had already been given to such men, and they could offer no help.

This man, like Caleb of old, had “another spirit” (Num 14:24). The “spirit” he possess was not

simply related to the gods, but to “the holy gods.” At this point the language of the queen is not precise, because her understanding was very rudimentary. Being a polytheist, she thought there were many gods. But what she did know, is that the man of whom she spoke was associated with holiness, uprightness, and moral rectitude.

The expression of the queen (i.e., “the spirit of the holy gods”) is a pagan way of referring to holy things. Although it was the common way in Babylon of referring to a spiritual reality, it was a wholly inappropriate way for spiritually informed people to speak. Those who insist on reducing the Word of God to the language of the street must tell us why it would not be appropriate to use this kind of language to refer to the Spirit of God. And, if this kind of language is unacceptable, what could possibly make worldly expressions proper containers for the truth of God under any circumstances?

This man was discovered several years before, during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, father of the dynasty in which Belshazzar was involved. He was ignored at that time also, until times arose when someone with unusual wisdom and insight was required. The qualities found in him were “light,” “understanding,” and “wisdom.” There were at least three notable occasions when these characteristics were displayed.

- First, when, as a young man, he displayed wisdom that was “ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in the realm” (1:20).
- Second, when Nebuchadnezzar had the dream of the great image that was destroyed by a supernatural stone (2:31-46).
- Third, when Nebuchadnezzar had his second dream of the great tree that was hewn down (4:10-27).

Now, a circumstance has arisen that has moved the queen to recall this most unique man.

It has been conjectured that Daniel was retired when Nebuchadnezzar died, which may very well be true. If so, he had been inactive in the affairs of state for about eight years, during the succeeding reigns of Evil-Merodach and Belshazzar.

Made Master

“ . . . whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers . . . ”

This exaltation was declared in the second chapter. “Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the

governors over all the wise men of Babylon” (2:48). In the fourth chapter, Nebuchadnezzar referred to Daniel in his exalted capacity as “master of the magicians” (4:9). But, alas, this was all in the past, and Daniel had, for the most part, been forgotten – for eight years !

It is apparent that at the time of Belshazzar. Daniel was not occupying this position, for he was not brought in when the king called for all of the Babylonian astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers. But now, God has stirred the memory of the queen, and will bring Daniel back into prominence.

A QUALIFIED MAN

“ . . . Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

The queen points out how well suited Daniel is for the occasion. He possesses abilities that are most appropriate for this very time.

Excellent Spirit

Other versions read “extraordinary spirit,” NASB “keen mind,” NIV “greater spirit,” DOUAY “a most special spirit,” BBE “a sharp mind,” NLT and “a marvelous spirit.” NJB

Daniel had an excellent mind, and excelled in the qualities of discernment and perception. He was not referred to as “brainy,” a “nerd,” or “real intellectual” – terms that tend to be derogatory in our society. In our time, a person gifted in mind must stand behind those with good looks, fine personalities, and physical abilities. But it will not do for Belshazzar to call such people before him now. The challenging handwriting on the wall cannot be met by an actor, athlete, humorist, or motivator. This requires someone with a mind that has been touched by the Spirit of God.

Knowledge and Understanding

One with “knowledge and understanding” can profitably process information. In the context of Scripture, “knowledge and understanding” involves clarifying and applying what God has revealed, or made known.

This is more than mere intellectual acumen, or possessing a trained and disciplined mind. While these qualities were doubtless possessed by Daniel, the “knowledge and understanding” he possessed were given to him by the Living God. It is said of Daniel that God gave him “knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams” (1:17). Confirming this knowledge and understanding to be an addition to mere human capabilities, Daniel had told

Nebuchadnezzar that God “gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding” NKJV (2:21). Natural aptitude and human disciplines are not sufficient to unravel messages from the Living God.

Interpreting Dreams and Showing Hard Sentences

Other versions read, “interpreting dreams, solving riddles,” NKJV “explaining enigmas,” NASB and “explanation of enigmas.” DOUAY An enigma is an obscure speech or writing, or something hard to understand or explain – like the handwriting on the wall. It is something that has to be unraveled.

In addition to interpreting God-sent dreams, Daniel could also unravel difficult problems – and one certainly was confronting Belshazzar. I want to again emphasize that this remarkable ability was a special gift from God. It was not the result of human analysis, natural endowments, or disciplined learning.

Dissolving of Doubts

Other versions read, “solving riddles,” NKJV “solving difficult problems,” NASB and “unfolding dark sayings.” BBE

The idea is that some sayings are like a tight knot that must be loosened, or undone, before they can be understood. Daniel, according to the gift of God, was able to take things that were in the realm of mystery, and make them clear to the understanding.

Thus the queen has introduced Belshazzar to a person within his realm who is noted for his accomplishments as well as his supernatural ability. Further, in the past, he was duly recognized by king Nebuchadnezzar, and will be no stranger to the environment of a king’s court. The stage is now set for the message of the Lord to be given.

APPLICATION ONE

We must learn from this event to call upon the Lord FIRST. He is to be our first recourse, not the last. It is the tendency of man to look to the Lord only after all other resources have proved futile. While this is common, it is completely wrong, and can in no way be justified. This is particularly true for the people of God – those in Christ Jesus. When they seek help from other sources first, they have betrayed an intolerable level of unbelief.

APPLICATION TWO

It will become apparent that Daniel kept his mind and heart in tune with the Lord. This was not a time for a backslidden or forgetful prophet to come into view. During a possible eight-year period of political inactivity, his heart and mind were maintained by faith. In him we find a confirmation that spiritual aptitudes can be kept in a state of maturity and growth, even when there is no public requirement for them. Those who are capable of handling and expounding the truth of God may go through periods of time when they are not asked to use their kingdom skills. But they must keep them in good order.

THE KING SPEAKS TO DANIEL

“ 13 Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? 14 I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. 15 And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the thing: 16 And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

It appears that Daniel lived in Babylon, although he was in relative obscurity. Some have suggested the queen may have maintained an acquaintance with the prophet. At any rate, it was known where he could be found, for he came to the palace that very night. A lengthy and exhaustive search for him was not required. Of course, after all of the surmising of men, it is the Lord who is arranging this entire sequence of events. He will use the knowledge of men, their acquaintances, etc., but it is Him that is doing the work.

ARE YOU THE ONE?

“Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?”

From this we see that Belshazzar was not personally acquainted with Daniel – even though that opportunity had been available to him. Notice that he makes no reference to Daniel’s former exalted position in the kingdom of Babylon, but condescendingly refers to him one of the “children of the captivity of Judah.” He seems to have no sense at all of the inadvisability of speaking down to Daniel as though he was one of his vassals.

Even though the queen had introduced Daniel as in every way a superior man, Belshazzar does not address him as a man of distinction. Not only does he refer to him as a captive of Judah, but as one whom Nebuchadnezzar brought to Babylon out of Jewry, or Judah. In my judgment, he is displaying a haughty and arrogant spirit, as though he was superior to Daniel and the people of Judah. However, before the might is over, he will find how wrong he was to speak in such a disdainful manner.

Not a few of God's people have experienced such treatment from the world – both the secular and the religious segments. Upon hearing Paul's defense, wicked Felix cried out in a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" (Acts 26:24). Indeed, it is ever true, even as the songwriter Isaac Watts put it: "Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God?" Indeed, it is not!

If you choose to live for the Lord, you will encounter much of this arrogant talk from your peers. But it is all short lived, just as surely as that of Belshazzar toward Daniel.

I HAVE HEARD OF YOU

"I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. 15 And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not show the interpretation of the thing: 16 And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts . . ."

I Have Heard

How often and when he had heard of Daniel, we do not know. It appears, however, that the word of the queen has suddenly stirred his memory. If that is the case, he had not called for him until this very hour, which shows what little regard he had for this man of God.

There is something noticeable about how he describes Daniel – doubtless referring to what the queen has just told him. The queen had said the "spirit of the holy gods" was in Daniel. Belshazzar eliminated the word "holy," saying only that "the spirit of the gods" was in him.

In my judgment, the king should have availed himself of the acquaintance of the prophet long before this time. Daniel was readily accessible to him, being within his kingdom, and apparently in the city of Babylon itself. How unlike the queen of Sheba he was! Jesus said of her, "The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here" (Mat 12:42). Surely that queen will do the same toward Belshazzar, who also was exposed to one, who though inferior to Jesus, had wisdom that surpassed that of Solomon.

Those who have access to men and women of God are responsible for taking advantage of that benefit. It will not do to simply say they did not have the time, or were unacquainted with the nature of the benefits they could have obtained. The Lord has never taken the neglect of His prophets lightly – and He has not changed.

They Could Not

As Nebuchadnezzar did, Belshazzar admits that those whom he had trusted, and who were prominent in his kingdom, could not decipher the message he so sorely wanted to understand.

Although he did not know why, we do well to consider it. A message that comes from God cannot be understood with worldly wisdom. Today, we are faced with a flood of theologians who prattle about the things of God as though they were mere novelties. They spout personal opinions, and the most foolish of notions, because they only possess worldly knowledge. They are like Belshazzar's wise men and astrologers. They cannot open for us the one thing we sorely need – God's Word.

The time has come for them to be cast out of the church, and men brought in who possess "spiritual understanding" (Col 1:9), and "speak in words that the Holy Spirit teaches" (1 Cor 2:13).

I Have Heard You Can

Still speaking to Daniel in an arrogant manner, Belshazzar repeats that he has heard of Daniel that he can "make interpretations and dissolve doubts." However, he makes no claim to believe these reports. Instead he says, "IF you can read this writing and tell me what it means." NIV In this he had fallen beneath Nebuchadnezzar, who, when he had dreamed of the great tree, simply told Daniel, "declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee" (Dan 4:18). But this night, the king cannot think in this manner.

Belshazzar, however, still puts a question mark upon Daniel: His unbelief still has a grip upon his heart. "IF you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation." NASB

REWARDS ARE OFFERED

" . . . now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom."

Now the king offers a reward to the prophet Daniel. But it is exactly the same reward he offered this impotent astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers (5:7). Even though he had heard of Daniel's greater ability, he does not offer him anything more than those of his own court who had failed so miserably. Thus, the disdain that the world has for the people of God is once again confirmed.

DANIEL ANSWERS IN WISDOM AND CONVICTION

“ 17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18 O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor: 19 And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down. 20 But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will.”

As you might expect, Daniel answers with spiritual insight. He also accents the glory of God and minimizes the glories and advantages of this present evil world. His answer has perspective, power, and conviction in it. He speaks forthrightly and with no ambiguity. He is obviously confident – full of faith and insight. He is not “rusty” because of any formal inactivity. His spiritual abilities are honed to a fine edge. Notice the authority in his words.

- Keep your gifts for yourself.
- I will read the writing.
- I will make known the interpretation.
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar what he had.
- Because, and only because, of what God gave him. Nebuchadnezzar could do whatever he wanted.
- Nebuchadnezzar was lifted in pride.
- He was removed from his throne.
- His glory was taken from him.
- He was driven from among men.
- His heart was made like the beasts.
- His dwelling was with wild beasts.
- They fed him with grass.
- His body was wet with dew.
- He learned God ruled in the kingdoms of men, appointing over them whomever He willed.

That was not a dissertation, developed over a few weeks, but an instant answer. It brought the past to bear upon the present, and was administered in wisdom and precision.

KEEP YOUR GIFTS

“ 17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another . . . ”

Unlike wicked Balaam, Daniel will not prophesy “for wages” (2 Pet 2:15). He has no regard for earthly incentives. In this way, he was responding appropriately to the arrogance of king Belshazzar. Daniel did not speak in this way to Nebuchadnezzar (4:19). He had even evidenced some regard for Nebuchadnezzar, declaring he wished the grievous message he had to give was for the king’s enemies, and not for the king himself. But this is not the way he speaks to Belshazzar. Why?

Because that very night this king had desecrated the holy vessels of the house of God. He had drank wine from those vessels while praising gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and wood. His sin was even worse than that of Nebuchadnezzar. God’s word to him would not allow for any recovery, as was given to Nebuchadnezzar.

Here again we see that all sin is not alike. There are transgressions that are more serious, and thus more weighty punishments are reaped because of them.

Like Abraham

Daniel’s response was much like that of Abraham to the king of Sodom. After a conspiracy of kings had come up against the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, and captured Lot, Abraham’s nephew, word got back to Abraham (then “Abram”). He armed three hundred and eighteen of his servants, and pursued those kings. After smiting them all , “he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people” (Gen 14:16).

The king of Sodom went out to meet Abram, saying to him, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.” The booty was significant, but did not attract the heart of the great patriarch. He responded, “And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich ” (Gen 14:22-23).

Like Elisha

The mighty prophet Elisha responded in a like manner to Naaman the Syrian, who he healed of leprosy. When Naaman offered the prophet “a blessing,” Elisha replied, “But he said, As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused” (2 Kgs 5:16).

Like Peter

When Simon the sorcerer sought to purchase with money the ability to confer the Holy Spirit upon others, Peter replied with convicting power. “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God” (Acts 8:20-21).

One of the sure marks of a man or woman of God is their preference for the praise of God rather than the praise of men. Thus, in his response to Belshazzar, Daniel has shown his faith in God, who alone can exalt and reward with true benefit.

I WILL READ THE WRITING

“ . . . yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation.”

Daniel will read the message because God has given him the understanding, and it must be said. He will read it out of a formal respect for the king’s office. He will read it because of his reputation as a man of God who delivers the word of God.

He does not need to go home and pray, as he did with Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream (2:17-18). He does not sit astonished for an hour as he did with his second dream (4:19). He gets to the work immediately, because what he says is to be fulfilled that very night.

REMEMBER NEBUCHADNEZZAR

“O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor . . .” This is precisely the message that Daniel had given Nebuchadnezzar some years earlier. “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (2:37). But the message bears repeating, for its truth had been forgotten, first by Nebuchadnezzar himself, and now by Belshazzar.

The Extent Of Nebuchadnezzar’s Power

“And for the majesty that He gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down.”

Here Daniel elaborates on Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, showing what absolute dominion had been given to him by the God of heaven. Just as surely as Pilate received his power from God – even power to have Jesus crucified (John 19:11) – so the Babylonian monarch had received his authority from God also. Note the extent of that power.

- All people were under him.
- All nations were responsible to him.
- All languages served him.
- The whole world trembled before him.
- Whoever he desired, he killed.
- Whoever he wanted to live, did so.
- He elevated whoever he wanted.
- He deposed whoever he desired.

This is some of the detail included in Daniel's word to Nebuchadnezzar: "O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth" (Dan 4:22). It fulfilled what God told Jeremiah He would do with Nebuchadnezzar. "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him . And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come" (Jer 27:5-7).

That is the kind of power God can give a single individual while he is a heathen! To this very day, this remains an exceedingly difficult thing for men to learn, even as it was for Belshazzar.

His Heart Was Lifted Up

"But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride . . ." Even though God did not tell Nebuchadnezzar this until he was well established in his reign, he was nevertheless held responsible for remaining humble.

Note how precisely Daniel describes the self-exaltation of Nebuchadnezzar.

- His heart was lifted up in pride. In this way, man begins to think more highly of himself than he ought to think. Self is viewed as though there were no God, and the seeming successes of life were the product of human ingenuity alone. This is the way God frequently describes human vanity. When Israel forgot God, it was because their heart was lifted up (Deut 8:14). After a sterling reign, Uzziah's heart was "lifted up to his destruction" (2 Chron 26:16). The same thing happened to Hezekiah, bringing the wrath of God upon him (2 Chron 32:25). This is the very transgression that caused the demise of the devil (Ezek 28:17). Thus, the humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar is also traced to the very moment he was "lifted up" (4:30).
- His mind was hardened in pride. Pride cannot coexist with humility. As soon as it rises within a person, the mind becomes like an impenetrable stone. Soon pure thoughts can no longer enter the mind. The thought processes become corrupt, and the individual becomes calloused and

unreasonable. A society in which pride is cultured and rewarded eventually becomes one in which God cannot work. For Nebuchadnezzar, a chastening came upon him that was without parallel in all of history.

Any individual, regardless of the advantages of direct or declared revelation, should conclude that prosperity cannot be induced by man alone. The words “all men are created equal” may have a pleasant enough ring to the political ear, but they are not altogether true. Some men have been “raised up” like Pharaoh (Ex 9:16). Others are given dominion for no apparent reason, like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:37). Others are elevated to places of prominence in a strange land, like Joseph, Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Gen 41:41; Dan 2:48,49).

When, however, men are “lifted up” in pride, whether they be heathen or Jew, unbeliever or believer, they immediately become answerable to the God who alone can exalt. It must be remembered that one of the seven things God is said to hate is a “proud look” (Prov 6:17).

He Was Deposed

“ . . . he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: 21 And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven . . . ”

Again, Daniel speaks with remarkable precision, accenting all of the right things, and drawing attention to mighty work of God. Notice the emphasis on what was MADE to happen to him – what was forced upon him.

- He was deposed from his throne.
- They took his glory from him.
- He was driven from the sons of men.
- His heart was made like a beasts heart.

It is a fearful thing, indeed, “to fall into the hands of a living God!” (Heb 10:31). Woe to the person who adopts a theology so insipid that he imagines he can tamper with God, provoke Him, or tempt Him! With all of the talk these days about God’s love of everyone, someone needs to raise their voice and declare how God regards the pride of man.

Until He Knew

“ . . . till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will.”

This reality is referred to a number of times in the book of Daniel. It constitutes one of the primary proclamations of this book.

- “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan 2:20-21).
- “. . . to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan 4:17).
- “. . . till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will” (Dan 4:25).
- “. . . until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan 4:32).

It is well to keep this thought uppermost in our minds as we go through the book of Daniel. I have given you four places where it is specifically stated. It will be declared countless times in other ways, confirming that this world is being governed by God Almighty, not by man, “whose breath is in his nostrils” (Isa 2:22). Just as surely as Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar were responsible to learn this reality, so are we. I will go so far as to say faith more firmly establishes this to our hearts than any dream or judgment could possibly do. In fact, it is only such an all powerful God that can be fully trusted.

KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT HUMILITY

“ 22 And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;
 23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.”

In a most powerful way, we will see that all men are responsible for glorifying God and being thankful. Even before there was any extensive revelation from God – when only the natural order lisped to men of His “eternal power and Godhead” – men were held accountable for their response to God.

- Although the knowledge of God was rudimentary and wholly without details, God darkened the hearts

of men “because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations” (Rom 1:21).

- The living God gave men over to “vile affections,” thus causing them to degenerate into unnatural behavior, because they “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever” (Rom 1:25).
- Men were given over to reprobate minds, to do things that were not proper, because “they did not like to retain God in their knowledge” (Rom 1:28).

No one should marvel at the Lord’s reaction to Belshazzar’s brazen insolence. He had a greater advantage than those prior to the flood. He had access to greater revelation than anyone from the flood until Moses. Coupled with that, God had worked among the very people over whom he presided. The knowledge of that working was a matter of public record.

YOU KNEW THIS!

„ “And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this . . .

See, all people are responsible for the truth that has been both declared and demonstrated in their presence. Until this point, God had not directed a specific word to Belshazzar. He had sent him no prophet with a message tailored for him. The king might very well have said, “God did not send me a dream. He did not send me a prophet, or make me eat grass in a field. How was I to know what he wanted of me ?”

There is no validity to that kind of reasoning. Men are held accountable for what they CAN know as well as what is particularly addressed to them. God had worked in Babylon, and it was Belshazzar’s responsibility to inquire into His workings – to ask about why the father of his dynasty was driven into the field. He should have sought out the proclamation Nebuchadnezzar had sent throughout the whole world, and looked into it with intense interest and humility.

It is apparent that the knowledge of God’s workings were at some time generally known within the royal family. That knowledge should have impacted the understanding and behavior of Belshazzar. He was inexcusable.

An Application

When considering the condition of our own country in general, and the church in particular, this passage is unusually instructive. Think of the great men of God that have lived in our country – the great awakenings, consciousness of God, and spreading of the Word that has occurred in history. This is

to say nothing of God's historical working among Israel – both His blessing and chastening of them. Detailed records of the church of the Lord Jesus have been with us, recounting how Jesus has reacted to both faithfulness and unfaithfulness, to pride and humility. The abundance of knowledge available to us vastly surpasses that which was available to Belshazzar.

Do not think for a single moment that God will not hold this generation in strict account for how it has handled this knowledge. He will be more exacting about it than He was with Belshazzar, because it is more abundant, and is characterized by greater light. Those who remain abysmally ignorant of God and His reactions to men are more guilty than Belshazzar. They have ignored mountains of truth, and pushed warehouses of available knowledge away from them.

Truly, “the times of this ignorance” are no longer tolerable. “Now,” God “commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30), and they must be about doing it. It is the church's business to call men into accountability, and then proclaim repentance and remission of sins (Lk 24:47).

LIFTED UP AGAINST GOD

“But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know . . .”

Now Daniel gets to the matter at hand – the single thing that has brought the judgment of God upon Belshazzar. For Nebuchadnezzar, this happened when he boasted of his own achievements while surveying the great city of Babylon. For Belshazzar, it occurred when he dared to bring God's holy vessels into his palace and drink wine from them. Then he compounded his transgression by praising “the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know ,” while he yet held the dedicated vessels of God's house in his hand. He did not do this privately, but publically, before “thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines.”

His deed will not be excused because he may have been drunk. He was sobered by the sight of a hand writing on the wall. A holy remembrance of what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar would have sobered him as well. He has no excuse for being obtuse.

YOU HAVE NOT GLORIFIED GOD!

“ . . . and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.”

Are people really responsible for glorifying God? Indeed they are, even if they are a Babylonian!

Keep in mind, Belshazzar had not been sent to a special theological school to learn these things. He was responsible for what he could have known. He could have inquired of the Jews that were in his city. He could have read the proclamation Nebuchadnezzar sent into all the world. He could have asked the queen about the matter, or even called for Daniel. But whether he did or not, he was responsible for knowing his breath was in the hand of God. By God's word he could either live or die – but neither could happen independently of Him.

All of Belshazzar's ways were in the hand of God, so that he could not even rule unless the God of heaven had given him to do so. He was totally responsible for recognizing that! Other versions of this passage read, "But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways," NIB "But the God in whose hand is your life breath and the whole course of your life, you did not glorify," NAB "But you have not honored the God who gives you the breath of life and controls your destiny!" NLT

And what may be said of this generation? If a Babylonian heathen was judged for not giving God honor and glory, what of those who have been subjected to the Gospel of Christ? What of those who are within walking distance of a fuller knowledge of God, yet have chosen to fritter their time away with entertainment and various forms of fleshly gratification? Are we to imagine that they are innocent? Indeed, they are no more innocent than this Babylonian king!

- This was the curse of the whole Gentile world – they did not give God glory (Rom 1:21-23).
- It was the curse of many generations of the Israelites (Judges 3:7; 1 Sam 12:9; Psa 78:11; 106:13,21; Hos 2:13).
- It was the cause of rebuke and possible judgment against the churches (Rev 2:5,16,21-22; 3:3,19).

Remember, the name of the Lord is "Jealous" (Ex 34:14). The more He gives, the less tolerant He is of those who do not give Him glory. After lavishing His love upon men, He will not overlook those who ignore Him. It is no wonder that the Apostle wrote to a recalcitrant Corinthian church, "Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" NIV (1 Cor 10:22). We are not to tempt the Lord our God, putting Him to the test, and trying His forbearance!

THE MESSAGE FROM GOD

" 24 Then was the part of the hand sent from Him; and this writing was written. 25 And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. 27 TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the

balances, and art found wanting. 28 PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

Now, after an appropriate introduction, Daniel comes to the matter of the writing on the wall. First, he had to set the stage for the word. We should not expect this message to be one of blessing or hope. This is, as will be confirmed in the following verses, a circumstance of great importance.

SENT FROM HIM

“Then was the part of the hand sent from him ; and this writing was written. And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

God has sent this message through “the part of the hand.” That “part” was identified as “fingers of a man’s hand” in verse five. Other versions read, “the fingers of the hand.” NKJV This most unusual thing was sent from God: i.e., “So from His presence the hand was sent and this writing was inscribed.” NRSV It was not, therefore, a vision, but a visible and tangible occurrence. The handwriting remained on the wall for all to see. It only consisted of four words, but it had mystified the wisest men in the empire. Four times Daniel alludes to it was writing – visible writing: “this writing was written . . . the writing that was written .”

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YOUR KINGDOM NUMBERED AND FINISHED

“This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it . . .” Other versions read, “God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it,” NASB “God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end,” NIV and “God has measured your sovereignty and put an end to it.” NJB

Note, this first word, or message, is repeated twice. It is similiar to Christ’s “Verily, verily ” (John 1:51). It is given, as I understand it, as a confirmation. This is an irreversible judgment from heaven. It is not possible for it to be called back, and it will happen shortly.

Your Kingdom Is Numbered

That is, the full days allotted to his kingdom had been completed. This was to Belshazzar what “the fulness of the Gentiles” will be to the Jews (Rom 11:25). This perfectly accords with Job’s assessment of life in general. “Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with Thee, Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass” (Job 14:5). The Kingdom of Belshazzar had reached its appointed conclusion. To be more particular, the kingdom of Babylon itself had reached its conclusion, and would pass to the Medes that very night. That is how precisely God is governing this world.

Your Kingdom Is Finished

Technically, this is not the meaning of the word MENE. That means, “Your kingdom is numbered.” This is Daniels inspired interpretation of the word. The kingdom of Babylon in general, and the kingdom of Belshazzar in particular, would be brought to a grinding conclusion that very evening.

I want to keep before you that this was not a linguistic interpretation of the writing. This is an inspired message with a meaning that only one to whom God had revealed it could translate .

This word is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah. “And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations” (Jer 25:12). However, to show that God does nothing without a cause, this demise is also said to have resulted from the insolence of king Belshazzar, who dared to defile something that had been dedicated to God.

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WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

“TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting . . .” Here God is pictured as carrying a balance in his hand – one in which men and their actions are weighed. Thus it is written, “Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed ” (1 Sam 2:3). Again it is written, “The way of the just is uprightness: Thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just ” (Isa 26:7).

In this case Belshazzar himself was placed in the Divine scales, as well as his kingdom in general, and the blasphemous deed he had committed that evening. The Lord does, indeed, weigh the “actions” of men as well as their persons. The solemn consideration of this reality is calculated to have a sobering effect on us.

The interpretation of this message is then given. Belshazzar was “found wanting.” Other versions read “found deficient,” NASB “found lacking,” YLT and “have failed the test.” NLT In other words, in the eyes of God, Belshazzar had no genuine worth. There was no further reason for his kingdom to continue. In fact, there was no reason for him to remain alive. He was, in fact, worthless. He had proved himself to be hardhearted, foolish, and insolent – even though marvelous advantages were given to him.

From this we learn there are certain Divine expectations – things He expects to find within and from men. No person is exempt from being “weighed” in the Divine balances in this world. Eventually, all men will be weighed in them at the day of judgment.

Whatever you may think of the Lord and your responsibility to Him, I urge you to live with your “weighing” in mind. Eventually, you will be put in the Lord’s balance. Your peers may tolerate foolish behavior from you, and you may appear for a while to be free from all assessment. But that is not the case, and only a fool would dare to think in such a manner.

!ysir>p;W

THE KINGDOM IS DIVIDED AND GIVEN TO OTHERS

“PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

The word “peres” means divided – something that is forcibly split up or divided up. It is a different form of the word “upharsin,” which is used in verse twenty-five. “Upharsin” is the plural form of “peres,” which accented a single kingdom being divided to two other kingdoms. Thus “peres” emphasizes a single judgment, while “upharsin” accents the result of that judgment.

Even though the kingdom of Babylon appeared stable, and even invincible, it was toppling on the precipice of disaster. Its marvelous unity was about to end, and that by Divine mandate. Not only would the kingdom be taken from Belshazzar, it would be divided among others. In this case, one kingdom would be replaced by two.

In interpreting this division, Daniel is very specific. The kingdom would be “GIVEN to the Medes and the Persians.” God would give it to them! He is, after all, a God who sets kings up and takes them down He gives kingdoms to whomever He desires.

In the first dream of Nebuchadnezzar, this very division was prophesied. Nebuchadnezzar was the “head of gold,” and the inferior kingdom that would replace him was represented by two arms of silver. Later, in the eighth chapter, this division is viewed from the standpoint of its rulers. They are depicted as two horns of a single ram. “The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia ” (Dan 8:20). In particular, they were “Darius the Mede” (5:31; 11:1) and “Cyrus the Persian” (6:28).

Thus the writing has been read and interpreted. The actions of Belshazzar have been duly noticed in heaven, and have provoked a judgment against him and his entire kingdom. The seriousness of his foolish deed will be confirmed by the immediacy of its judgment.

ONE IS EXALTED, THE OTHER IS SLAIN

“ 29 Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.”

The response of Belshazzar is not what one would expect. Some form of extreme response would be thought appropriate – like crying out in repentance, or lashing out in condemnation against Daniel like Herod did against John the Baptist. However, we must take care not to take what has been placed in Divine balances, and put it in the scales of men!

We are witnessing the result of a Divine mandate – something God is causing to happen. It should not surprise us, therefore, that the king reacts as he does. Is it not written, “The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever he will” (Prov 21:1). I take it that the Lord is turning the king’s heart toward Daniel. It is true, the king had made a sort of commitment to Daniel, but it is better to view the fulfillment of that commitment as the work of God, not the kindness or faithfulness of the man God has judged.

DANIEL IS EXALTED

“Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

After a season of relative inactivity, Daniel is suddenly vaulted into prominence once again. He is given the appropriate attire, a recognized symbol of authority, and a position that will be honored.

Perhaps Belshazzar in his wickedness imagined this might secure his kingdom a little longer. If so, that had no real bearing on the case. God was actually preparing Daniel to extend his prominence to another dynasty.

BELSHAZZAR IS SLAIN

“In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.” Other versions read, “that very night,” NKJV and “that same night.” NASB

Daniel does not describe the particulars of how Belshazzar was slain. It was enough that his reign had been concluded by heaven’s decree. As a matter of interest, history records the following.

In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain . Not by a servant of his own, as Jacchiades; or by an eunuch, one of his guards, as Saadiah and Joseph ben Gorion; but by Gadales and Gobryas, who led Cyrus’s army up the river Euphrates into the city of Babylon, its course being turned; the inhabitants of which being revelling and rioting, and the gates open, these men went up to the king’s palace; the doors of which being opened by the king’s orders to know what was the matter,

they rushed in, and finding him standing up with his sword drawn in his own defence, they fell upon him, and slew him, and all about him, as Xenophon relates; and this was the same night the feast was, and the handwriting was seen, read, and interpreted. XENOPHON, Cyropaedia, 1.7 sect 22,23

Thus ended the night of Belshazzar’s blasphemous deed. Daniel was exalted, and he was slain.

CONCLUSION

The event we have reviewed fulfills the first part of Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream. The Babylonian empire falls in order that it might be replaced with the inferior Medio-Persian empire.

It is very rare that two kingdoms join in a single rule. This is, of course, the Lord's doing, "and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psa 118:23). The prophesy of Isaiah was also fulfilled. "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isa 13:19).

We should learn from this that the world is precisely ordered by the Lord, with no aspect of it being out of control. There are at least two things we should conclude from this.

- That nothing is out of control, and hence we should not allow worry or anxiety to take hold of our hearts and minds.
- That having faith in God is the wisest thing a mortal can do. A God who governs the whole world is worthy of our trust. However, when we add to that the consideration that His government has been placed upon Jesus, and that He is ruling the world for His people, it becomes a sin of the greatest magnitude to fail to believe and trust Him.

Do not hesitate to place your faith in God, refusing to lean to your own understanding. Just as surely as the Lord considered Daniel, so will He consider all who believe on His Son.

DARIUS AND THE THIRD TESTING OF DANIEL

Lesson #17

INTRODUCTION

In five chapters, we have moved from the overthrow of Jerusalem and the capture of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, to the slaying of Belshazzar, final king of the Babylonian empire. Some most intriguing facts were revealed in this section, each one designed to teach us of the meticulous workings of the Lord. The kingdom belongs to Him, and He is the “Governor among the nations” (Psa 22:28). Lest we forget these instructive facts, a brief rehearsal of them will be in order. I will only list the things specifically said about the Lord Himself, although He was unquestionably in everything that took place.

- The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into Nebuchadnezzar’s hand (1:1a).
- The Lord gave part of the vessels of the house of God into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (1:1b).
- God brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs (1:9).

- God gave the four children of Judah knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom (1:17a).
- God gave Daniel understanding in all wisdom and dreams (1:17b).
- God revealed the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:19).
- Daniel saw that God changes times and seasons (2:21a).
- Daniel saw that God removes kings and sets up kings (2:21b).
- Daniel saw that God gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding (2:21c).
- Daniel saw that God reveals the deep and secret things, and knows what is in darkness, or shrouded (2:22).
- God gave Daniel wisdom and might, answering the prayer of Daniel and his friends for mercy to know the king's dream and its meaning (2:23).
- There is a God in heaven that reveals secrets (2:28a).
- In a dream and visions, God made known to Nebuchadnezzar what would be in the latter days (2:28b).
- The God of heaven gave Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom, strength, power, and glory (2:37).
- The Lord made Nebuchadnezzar ruler over men, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven (2:38).
- God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed or succeeded by another (2:44a).
- The kingdom God set up would break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, standing forever (2:44b).
- The God of heaven made known to Nebuchadnezzar what would come to pass hereafter (2:45).
- God is the God of gods, Lord of kings, and revealer of secrets (2:47).
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego confess God is able to deliver them from the fiery furnace, and will do so (3:17).
- God sent His angel and delivered the three from the fiery furnace. Not a hair was singed, no hurt was found on them, and the smell of fire was not on their clothes (3:27-28).
- Nebuchadnezzar confesses there is no God who can deliver like this (3:29).
- Nebuchadnezzar proclaims to the world the signs and wonders God wrought toward him (4:2).
- God revealed to Nebuchadnezzar that he was going to punish him for his pride and insolence (4:9-24).

- God had the king driven from among men (4:25a).
- God gave the king a beast's heart, so that he ate the grass of the field (4:25b).
- God decreed the king would stay in the field for seven years, until he learned what God intended for him to know (2:25c).
- The Most High rules in the kingdoms of man (2:25d).
- The Most High gives kingdoms to whomever He wills (2:25e).
- The heavens do rule (2:26).
- A voice from heaven informed Nebuchadnezzar he had been deposed of his kingdom, which was fulfilled that very hour (4:31).
- God lives for ever (4:34a).
- God's dominion is an everlasting dominion (4:34b).
- God's kingdom is from generation to generation (4:34c).
- God fulfills His will in the army of heaven (4:35a).
- God fulfills His will among the inhabitants of the earth (4:35b).
- None can stay the hand of God (4:35c).
- None can ask God what He is doing (4:35d).
- God is the "King of heaven" (4:37a).
- All of God's ways are truth (4:37b).
- All of God's ways are judgment (4:37c).
- God is able to abase those who walk in pride (4:37d).
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom, majesty, glory, and honor (5:18).
- God appoints whomever He wills over kingdoms, even the basest of men (5:21).
- The breath and ways of Belshazzar were in God's hand (5:23).

- God numbered and finished Belshazzar’s kingdom (5:26).
- God weighed Belshazzar in the Divine scales and found him wanting (5:27).
- God divided Belshazzar’s kingdom, giving it to the Medes and the Persians (5:28).

There are forty-eight declarations of the capability and will of the God of heaven – all within the first five chapters of Daniel. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but has been gleaned by merely glancing over the text.

The point is that these affirmations provide a background for the text before us. The great faith of Daniel that will be made known was founded upon the apprehension of these things. His perception of these realities is what enabled him to trust in the Lord with all of His heart, not leaning to His own understanding.

FAITH IS NOT SIMPLE

When people speak of “simple faith,” or “simply trusting God,” They are not speaking wisely. There is nothing simple about faith. That is why it has to “come” to us from God (Rom 10:17; Eph 6:23). Faith is marvelous, not simplistic. It postulates some knowledge of God that has enabled the believer to cast down all fear and doubt. One might cite Abraham, who believed God although he knew relatively little of Him. Yet, God had revealed Himself to Abraham in most unusual ways.

- He “said” to Abram “Get thee out of thy country . . .” (Gen 12:1-4).
- God “appeared” to Abram, declaring He would give him the land of Canaan (Gen 12:7-8).
- The Lord “plagued Pharaoh And his house with great plagues” because he had presumed to take Abram’s wife for his own (Gen 12:17).
- The Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah after divulging to Abram what He was going to do, and hearing Abram’s plea to save the city for the sake of at least ten righteous (Gen 13:10).
- God spoke to Abram after Lot departed from him, promising to give him all of the land he could see, and that He would multiply his seed (Gen 13:14-16).
- Melchizedec blessed Abram in the name of the Most High God, declaring He possessed heaven and earth, and had subdued Abram’s enemies (Gen 14:18-20).
- God appeared again to Abram, declaring he himself would bear a son, who would be his heir (Gen 15:1-5). It was at this point that “believed” is used for the first time in Scripture. “And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6).

I give this brief account to confirm that Abram did not “simply believe” God. He had considerable exposure to the Lord, had heard much from Him, and Melchisedek had declared the Lord to him. It was after this exposure – after his acquaintance with the Lord – that he “believed in the Lord.”

IN A HEATHEN REALM

I want to underscore that all of the marvelous working of the Lord in this book occurred in a heathen realm, over which a heathen monarchs presided. The conditions were anything but favorable. From the standpoint of a Divine covenant, Daniel was living under the inferior covenant, that was destined to be replaced by a better one. The events took place during a time of Divine chastening – the seventy-year Babylonian captivity. Daniel, who is the principle mortal in this book, although eventually exalted, was among “the captives of Judah.” He was away from his homeland, had no access to the temple, and from a tender age was exposed extensively to Babylonian wisdom. He was not appreciated by his peers, and at the time of this chapter begins to serve under a third king. He has consistently been brought into the limelight when a crisis arose. His life has been threatened and, at this point, appears to be dwelling alone. It is difficult to conceive of anyone being in more a challenging situation.

The knowledge of these circumstances should bring great hope to the heart of all believers. If you live by faith, where could you possibly be placed where the Lord could not work through you? What is there that can justify losing hope, being overly discouraged, or thinking you have been left alone?

DARIUS TAKES THE KINGDOM

“ 5:31 And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.” The very night Belshazzar was slain, the kingdom was wrenched from the Babylonians and given to the Medes and the Persians. This is one of several instant judgments in Scripture, and is designed to assist us in fearing the Lord. We should be repulsed by any teaching, emphasis, or view of life that thrusts the knowledge of Divine judgment into the background. It is possible to obtain a view of Scripture that rarely, if ever, gives due thought to the Lord and His throne of judgment. I fear this is altogether too popular in our time. However, no such view will be received when we take this passage of Scripture seriously, embracing what it says.

ABOUT DARIUS

“Darius the Median . . .” There has been a great deal of controversy concerning this man. This is largely owing to the absence of his name in profane history. Of course, throughout history there have been a number of Scriptural people whose existence was questioned because known historical records had not mentioned them. Their names, however, were eventually discovered in historical records or monuments, at which time they were recognized as valid. I will not take the time to mention these occurrences here, as knowledge of them is available to those considering the pursuit of such knowledge worthy of their time.

In my judgment, however, such quests are out of order. The Word of God is not to be measured by the writings and analyses of mortals. Rather, the opposite is to be the case. If the Scriptures were written by “holy men” who spoke as they were “moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:21), what possible reason can be adduced for engaging in an effort to determine if they are true or not? And where do such efforts end? Are they adequate to confirm the existence of the holy angels, Gabriel or Michael, who were high ranking angels, the devil, demons, Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, or others? And what about the twelve Apostles, Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Luke, and other key figures. Or, the giving of the Law at Sinai, the ascension of Jesus, or the creation of the world itself?

Are we to believe such accounts must be attested by the literature and records of this world? Is the validity of the accounts of the flood, the scattering at Babel, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah to be gauged by the writings of mortal men? And what of the atoning death of Christ, His resurrection, His enthronement in glory, and His present intercession for the saints? Where does human history stand on these persons and events?

Such thinking is too absurd to be dignified by research, or the imagination that anything valuable can be obtained by comparing them with Scripture. Those who wish to defend such a procedure are engaged in a losing effort.

It should not surprise us that God speaks of people largely omitted from worldly history: i.e., Moses, the holy prophets, John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, and Paul. Thus, when someone raises the objection that worldly history makes no mention of Darius the Mede, we simply reply “So what!” What matter does that make. It only means they either called him by another name, or did not see him as important in history. We either believe “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” or we do not (2 Tim 3:16). If we believe this, we have no interest in whether world history is in synch with Scripture or not. In the end, all of the words of men will be judged by the Word of God in the presence of God.

Distinguished from Darius the Persian

This “Darius,” by being called “the Median,” or “Mede,” NKJV is distinguished from “Darius the Persian,” mentioned by Nehemiah (Neh 12:22).

The Son of Ahasuerus

Later, Daniel refers to this man as “Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans” (Dan 9:1 – 538 BC). This Ahasuerus was not the husband of Esther, mentioned throughout that book and was a Persian king (i.e., Esth 1:1,2,9 – 480 BC). Nor, indeed, was it the Ahasuerus mentioned in the book of Ezra (Ezra 4:6 – 458 BC).

Babylonian Captivity Ended

During the first year of Darius’ reign, Daniel understood from the books of Jeremiah that the Babylonian captivity was ended (Dan 9:1-2).

Thus we see that Darius is more noted for the time marked by his appearance rather than his kingly exploits. The captivity ended in his reign, and the Babylonian empire was ended by him also. Were it not for that, he probably would not even be mentioned.

HOW THE KINGDOM WAS TAKEN

“ . . . took the kingdom.” Other versions read, “received the kingdom,” NKJV/NASB/NRSV and “took over the kingdom.” NIV Earlier, Daniel said the kingdom would be “given to the Medes and the Persians” (5:28). Therefore, the only reason Darius was able to take the kingdom is because it had been given to him by God.

Historians date this fateful evening as October 12, 539 B.C.

Some Records

The following is a brief description of the fall of Babylon from McClintok and Strong’s Cyclopedia of Biblical Knowledge.

“Under the last king, B.C. 538, Babylon was taken by Cyrus, after a siege of two years, in the dead of the night. Having first, by means of its canals, turned the river into the great dry lake west of Babylon, and then marched through the emptied channel, he made his way to the outer walls of the fortified palace on its banks, when, finding the brazen gates incautiously left open by the royal guards while engaged in carousals, he entered with all his train; ‘the Lord of Hosts was his leader,’ and Babylon, as an empire, was no more.”

The Bible Knowledge Commentary includes the following.

“The city had been under assault by Cyrus. In anticipation of a long siege the city had stored supplies to last for 20 years. The Euphrates River ran through the city from north to south, so the residents had an ample water supply. Belshazzar had a false sense of security, because the Persian army, led by Ugbaru, was outside Babylon’s city walls. Their army was divided; part was stationed where the river entered the city at the north and the other part was positioned where the river exited from the city at the south. The army diverted the water north of the city by digging a canal from the river to a nearby lake. With the water diverted, its level receded and the soldiers were able to enter the city by going under the sluice gate. Since the walls were unguarded the Persians, once inside the city, were able to conquer it without a fight.”

Isaiah’s Prophecy

Isaiah spoke of the demise of Babylon in violent and abrupt words. “Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground: there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal: uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. As for our redeemer, the LORD of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans: for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms” (Isa 47:1-5).

Other prophecies of Isaiah concerning the fall of Babylon are found in chapters 13, 14, and 21 of his prophecy. God revealed much to Isaiah on this point. Those texts contain these salient expressions. “The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see. Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness . . . They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the LORD, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land . . . And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeaes’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah . . . That thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers . . . And, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods he hath broken unto the ground” (Isa 13:1-3,5,19; 14:4-5; 21:9).

Jeremiah’s Prophecy

Jeremiah also foretold the fall of Babylon. “Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast . . . For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain. And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD . . . I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the LORD . . . Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind; And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about . . . Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary” (Jer 50:2-3, 9-10,24; 51:1-

Concluding Remarks

As ingenious as the military strategy against Babylon was, that is not the reason for its success. The fall of Babylon had been determined by God Himself, who alone is “the Governor among the nations.” He used Darius and the Medes, but it was His judgment that brought the city down. God uses means, but it is HE that uses them!

Thus, the traits that have been ascribed to the Living God in the book of Daniel, have been marvelously displayed in His dealings with Babylon and its kings. The revelations He has given of Himself, whether in bold proclamations or dreams, are actually lived out before us and its kings. In the recorded events themselves God is more clearly seen.

- “Wisdom and might are His” (2:20).
- “He changes times and seasons” (2:21a).
- “He removes and raises up kings” (2:21).
- God gives men kingdoms, “power, and strength, and glory” (2:3).
- He is a “God of gods, and Lord of kings” (2:47).
- His “signs” and “wonders” are great (4:3).
- “The Most High rules in the kingdoms of men” (4:25a).
- God gives the kingdoms of men to “whomever He chooses” (4:25b).
- God’s “dominion is an everlasting dominion” (4:34a).
- God’s Kingdom is “from generation to generation” (4:34b).
- God does according to His will in “the army of heaven” (4:35a).
- God does according to His will “among the inhabitants of the earth” (4:35b).
- No one can “restrain” God’s hand or say to Him, “What have you done?” (2:35c).
- God gives “peoples” and “nations” to rulers (5:19).
- God “finishes” kingdoms (5:26).

It is imperative that we comprehend the working of the Lord in this book. If we fail to do so, it will not edify us. At the root of edification is the perception of the hand of the Lord. If that is not seen, the soul simply cannot be fortified and made mature. The soul cannot be fortified by mere academic observations.

DANIEL IS AGAIN EXALTED

“ 6:1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.”

According to the prophecies of the Lord, Babylon is fallen, and is now brought into the Media-Persian empire. In His inscrutable wisdom, and in righteousness, he has shuffled the kingdoms of men. On the surface, this shuffling appeared to be the result of Median military shrewdness and Babylonian obtuseness. However, it was actually God intruding into the affairs of men, forcing Himself among them And moving history along to the fulfillment of His own purpose.

I want to ever keep this before you because of the general lack of awareness of these things among professed church. During the past few decades a remarkable ignorance of God has developed among the churches. It is so remarkable that scarcely a person can be found that has a spiritual grasp of the nature and purpose of God Almighty. The wisdom of men has been so vaunted God can hardly be seen. For this reason trust is being put in men, procedures, and purported principles of thought and life rather than in the Living God. This circumstance mandates a serious perusal of this book.

Darius the Mede now begins his reign. Once again, the exact time of the events that follow is not made known, for that is not the point. Divine involvements are the issue, and the accomplishment of His purpose is the focus. Therefore, the Spirit moves to the next significant event in view of these things.

THE HIERARCHY OF MEDIAN POWER

“ 6:1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2 And over these three presidents . . . ”

Our attention is immediately turned to Daniel, God’s man for the occasion. It is apparent that Darius, although taking the political rule, is actually incidental. The facts that are given concerning him are but a context in which Daniel will become the prominent man in the new political regime. Further, that prominence will be primarily spiritual – a prominence that remains profitable to the saints to this very hour.

An Hundred and Twenty Princes

Other versions refer to the “princes” as “satraps.” NKJV,NASB,NIV These were Persian viceroys over provinces into which the Persian empire was divided. Governors were under them (such as Zerubbabel and Nehemiah, Ezra 4:3,6; Neh 2:9). We might think of them as rulers over regions. This form of Persian rule is mentioned in the book of Esther. “Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces)” (Est 1:1).

I understand “the whole kingdom” to refer to the newly acquired kingdom of Babylon, and not to the whole Persian empire, of which Babylon was but a part.

Three Presidents

Other versions refer to these “presidents” as “governors,” NKJV “commissioners,” NASB “administrators,” NIV “princes,” DOUAY , “supervisors,” NAB and “chief rulers.” BBE These “presidents” would be much like the “secretaries”

in our own government (i.e., Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, etc.). The one hundred and twenty “princes” were answerable to these “presidents,” who presided over them.

DANIEL WAS FIRST

“ . . . of whom Daniel was first . . . ” This is why God moved Belshazzar to exalt Daniel, although he himself would be killed on the very night he did so. He was compelled by God to do so. Thus, when Darius took over, he first saw Daniel clothed in royal apparel with the golden chain of authority about his neck. While this is a mere conjecture, I do not doubt that Darius heard something of Daniel, his prophecies and wisdom. Perhaps he even heard of his declaration of the fall of Babylon, and it being given to the Medes and the Persians.

Aside from these speculations, God was working through Darius, elevating Daniel to a place of prominence. This was done in order that the Word and purpose of God might be the better known. From yet another perspective, this was God working all things together for the good of Daniel (Rom 8:28).

This should bring great encouragement to every child of God. If God can exalt a captive Jew in a new government, and through a king who did not know him, what can be done with those whose lives are “hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3).

NO DAMAGE

“ . . . that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.” Other versions read, “so that the king would suffer no loss,” NKJV “might have no trouble,” DOUAY “Should not be troubled,” Septuagint and “to safeguard the king’s interests.” NJB

This could include the loss of revenue, tolls, taxes, and the likes (as illustrated in the charge leveled at the Jews in the book of Ezra 4:13). “Damage,” or “loss,” would also refer to any failure to carry out the king’s objectives, or allowing any opposition to him.

The government of Darius was not principally provided for the people themselves, but in order to the execution of the king’s will. That is the manner of worldly rule, and that is why God’s Kingdom will eventually crush all worldly kingdoms.

DANIEL FINDS FAVOR, AND IS PREFERRED

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

Introductory Thought

Our text immediately deals with the elevation of Daniel and the trials associated with that elevation.

Additionally, I want to set this whole matter in proper perspective. It was during the first year of Darius' reign that Daniel "understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem" (Dan 9:2). Those books were the writings of Jeremiah the prophet (Jer 25:11,12; 29:10). God opened them up to Daniel's understanding.

Thus, while Daniel's rapid elevation was going on, his heart and mind were still set upon the Word of the Lord. The words that follow reflect the effect of Daniel's faith and focus.

DANIEL IS PREFERRED

"Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes . . ." Other versions read, "Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps," NKJV "Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps," NASB "Soon distinguished himself above all the other presidents and satraps," NRSV "Daniel excelled all the princes and governors," DOUAY "Daniel surpassed the presidents and the satraps," DARBY and "Daniel did his work better than the chief rulers and the captains." BBE

In this verse, the word "preferred" means to become chief. The idea is that he immediately began to rise to the top because of the way in which he fulfilled his duties. He was not deterred by a change in the government. The fact that he had been in relative obscurity after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, and prior to Belshazzar's feast, had not eroded his confidence, zeal, or excellent manner of work.

Thus, the king's decision to make Daniel the "first" of the three presidents was justified. The work of Daniel confirmed he was suitable to hold that position. All of this was the product of his faith in and commitment to the living God. He excelled because God blessed him.

A Lesson to be Learned

When we live by faith and walk in the Spirit, we will become better at what we do in this world. Faith is in no way divorced from the every-day routines of life. No person in Christ should be noted for being a bad worker, or for laziness, or for not executing their duties with faithfulness and wisdom. Nor, indeed, should any of them be advanced to places of responsibility, only to prove unworthy of such advancement. Faith must characterize all of life!

AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT

". . . because an excellent spirit was in him . . ." Other versions read, "because he possessed an extraordinary spirit," NASB "by his exceptional qualities," NIV "there was a special spirit in him," BBE "his great ability," NLT and "was so evidently superior." NJB

Daniel was not distinguished by academic credentials (although he did have them, 1:4). Rather, it is what he accomplished in the execution of his duties that marked him out.

This is wholly at variance with the norm of the business, academic, and religious worlds. Men are too often elevated, or given responsible positions, purely upon the basis of their academic achievements and credentials. This was not the case with Joseph, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech, or Abednego. It is not why the Apostles and Prophets were given their positions. It was not the criteria the early church used for recognizing elders, deacons, or any other God-ordained office. Neither should it be the means the church of our day uses to make critical determinations. To do so is to demonstrate a wisdom that is beneath that of Darius the Mede. This is not comely for a person in Christ.

When it came to the handling of the affairs of the kingdom, Daniel proved to be more competent, more expert, more skillful, and more proficient. He was superior in every aspect of his duties. He did his job better, carrying out the king's will in a more precise and profitable manner. The king did not prefer him because of his looks, his education, or his professional demeanor before the people. Rather, it was because of his aptitude – an “excellent spirit.” That aptitude was the result of Daniel's consistent faith, coming to him from God.

Solomon said, “a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit” (Prov 17:27). Once before, Daniel was referred to as one in whom an “excellent spirit” was found (5:12). In that verse, another translation reads “keen mind.” NIV He was noted for his quick perception.

DARIUS CONSIDERS

“ . . . and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.” Other versions read, “the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm,” NKJV “the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom,” NASB “the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom,” NIB and “and it was the king's purpose to put him over all the kingdom.” BBE

From the king's point of view, it was the “excellent spirit” of Daniel that moved Darius to purpose this promotion. But actually, God was behind it. I understand “the whole realm” to pertain to the Babylonian kingdom Darius had conquered, and not to the whole Persian empire.

Keep in mind that Daniel is not a young man. He is now advanced in years. The end of the Babylonian captivity is in site (Dan 6:1), which probably puts Daniel in his seventies. His age, however, has not dulled his “excellent spirit.” He still excels his peers, regardless of their age, or lack of official activity. In this regard, he is much like Moses.

It is a great point of concern that the modern church is often less discerning of the capacities of men of faith than Darius the Mede! I have no doubt that Daniel's resume, should it be submitted for an official position, would be considered by few, if any, modern churches. Such attitudes have robbed the church, making it more reliant upon the world and its vain wisdom than upon the God of heaven. Jesus and the Holy Spirit have actually been upstaged by the world's paltry wisdom. It is difficult to conceive of a condition being more serious than that.

THE STAGE IS SET

Thus the stage has been set for another display of Divine power. As is elsewhere declared, “For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His” (2 Chr 16:9). The Lord is eager and most serious in this quest for one through whom He can work. He has found such a person in Daniel, and will now “strongly support” him. He will so work in Daniel's behalf, that throughout the remainder of history, his favor of Daniel will be declared to both young and old. Wherever the Scriptures are known, the record that follows will also be known. It constitutes a proclamation of God's power, and is a tribute to a man of faith and patience.

AN OCCASION SOUGHT AGAINST DANIEL

“ 4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.” At once we see the Babylonian wise men had no love for Daniel. This was particularly brought to the surface when they heard Darius was determined to make him the head over the whole kingdom. They now became his persecutors. They knew they could not oppose Daniel openly, so became creative in their efforts to bring him down.

SEEKING A FAULT CONCERNING THE KINGDOM

“ 4 Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom . . . ” Other versions read, “sought to find some charge,” NKJV “trying to find a ground of accusation,” NASB “tried to find grounds for complaint,” NIV “were looking for some cause for putting Daniel in the wrong,” BBE “began searching for some fault.” NLT

These men were provoked by Darius’ intention to make Daniel the head over the whole realm. Although many of them knew of his spotless character, and the precision with which he declared the future, they could not bring themselves to love a Jew. Of course, tactics like this are still common in political circles. However, this is not a mere political issue. This will prove to be an occasion where God will make known HIS preferences, and at the same time eliminate some of these pretentious Babylonian wise men.

Concerning the Kingdom

These wicked men were not simply looking for some moral flaw in Daniel. They knew they could not find such a defect. Rather, they sought to discredit him in matters of the State: “concerning the kingdom,” NKJV “in regard to government affairs,” NASB “in his conduct of government affairs,” NIV and “in connection with the kingdom.” NRSV

Will Daniel’s faith and faithfulness transport over to his daily job? This is an area where many professed believers fail miserably, and there is no satisfactory excuse for it. Like Daniel, those who serve the Lord are to be exemplary in their worldly affairs, whether domestic, social, or political. Even if the circumstances are not favorable, or disruption of significant proportion has occurred, the child of God is to be found faultless – “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2:15). Daniel will serve as a godly example for us in this matter.

THEY COULD FIND NOTHING

“ . . . but they could find none occasion nor fault . . . ” Other versions read, “they could find no charge or fault,” NKJV “they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption,” NASB “they could find no corruption in him,” NIV and “they could find nothing to his discredit, and no case of negligence; he was so punctilious that they could not find a single instance of maladministration or neglect.” NJB

This is the Spirit’s tribute to the impeccable character, faithfulness, and diligence of Daniel. It also opens up something of the meaning of “ excellent spirit.” If there had been the slightest evidence of corruption, Daniel’s opponents would have found it. Their aim was to have him deposed from office by proving he was corrupt like themselves.

Judas, you may recall, did not conduct himself flawlessly in the business affairs of Jesus and His disciples. It is written of him, “But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, “hy wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.’ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it ” (John 12:4-6). No one can afford to take their relationship to Christ for granted, or imagine they are exempt from falling!

Learning from this Event

I have often heard Christians complain because their colleagues at work sought for a fault in them. It is not unusual to hear such people say they are not perfect, or that we all make mistakes. But Daniel will not have the luxury of excusing his critics so easily. The truth of the matter is that believers are to see to it their enemies can find no fault in them.

We are admonished to have “sound speech, that cannot be condemned ; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you ” (Titus 2:8).

Hear the word of exhortation, “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless , the sons of God, without rebuke , in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2:14-15). Such things are to be taken seriously by us.

One more word on this matter will suffice. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ ” (1 Pet 3:15-16).

If the light of believers is to shine before men, it will do so when their affairs are all in order, and their lives are conducted with obvious integrity. God is not honored when our enemies find glaring deficiencies in our lives.

HE WAS FAITHFUL

“ . . . forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.” Other versions read, “because he was trustworthy, and neither corrupt nor negligent,” NIV and “they could not find a single instance of maladministration or neglect.” NJB

After a punctilious search for some failure pertaining to his work, it became obvious that Daniel conducted himself with total integrity and trustworthiness. He had not withheld any revenues from the king. His accounts were all in order – no sloppy bookkeeping or manners that would embarrass the king or cause reproach to him. He did not mishandle any of the affairs of State, or blunder, acting foolishly in matters of management. There simply was not a single thing they could find against him! God was glorified by his conduct.

THE ONLY WAY

“ 5 Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.”

The wicked do not cease to plot against the righteous when they can find nothing against them – even when they are ashamed of their false accusations. In the case of Jesus, His enemies sought false witnesses to buttress their

fabricated case against Him (Matt 26:59-60). The Jewish council “suborned men” to speak against Stephen (Acts 6:11). Jewish opponents of the Gospel began spreading the word that Paul taught, “Let us do evil that good may come” (Rom 3:8). It is the manner of the ungodly to work at reproaching the people of God. They are creative, diligent, and consistent in their effort.

Thus we should not think it a strange thing that Daniel’s foes refuse to abandon their efforts to discredit him.

WE WILL NOT BE ABLE

“Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel . . .” Other versions read, “We shall not find any charge,” NKJV “We shall not find any ground of accusation,” NASB and “We will never find any basis for charges against this man.” NIV

Any effort to find fault in Daniel’s presidency was totally vain. Nothing could be found. He was consistent and faithful in all things. He was totally trustworthy, seeking the interest of the king, and never allowing reproach to be brought against him. When they say “this Daniel,” they are speaking with utter contempt and disdain. They have no respect or regard for him, even though his life is spotless. Believers do well not to expect their enemies to honor them when their conduct is flawless and marked with obvious integrity and faithfulness. The world does love “its own,” but has no regard for the children of God. It has always been true, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:19). Believers must not be naive in this regard. Even spotless conduct in the saints cannot move the world to love them.

EXCEPT

“ . . . except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” Other versions read, “unless it has something to do with the law of his God,” NIV “unless we try something to do with the law of his God,” NJB and “Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the requirements of his religion.” NLT

These wicked men did not think for a single moment they could induce Daniel to break the Law of his God – and that is not how they reasoned. Rather, they were banking on the fact that he would NOT violate the Law of His God, or in any way alter the manner in which he served Him. They knew Daniel would not forsake or abandon any form of his allegiance to God. He would fulfill all his vows to the Lord, keep His commandments, and conduct his life with His God at its center.

Application

I have often pondered with what ease some souls are moved away from their commitments to God. All too often the slightest pressure, the most casual suggestion, or the most minute interruption moves them to turn from their dedication to the Lord. It may take the form of moving them to forsake the assembling of themselves together (Heb 10:25), devoting themselves to the reading of Scripture, or praying. Under worldly pressure, however, they soon forget their promises to God – when He took away their sins and accepted them in Christ.

All of this may seem quite innocent, and wordy explanations may be offered for abandoning a commitment to the Lord. However, after all has been said and done, we have the example of Daniel before us. We do well to take heed to his manners. He was living under an inferior covenant with inferior promises (Heb 8:6). Yet, under those circumstances he towers above great numbers of professing Christians.

Such things ought not be, and no amount of fancy philosophizing can dignify the conduct of those who carry on their lives with less consistency and integrity than Daniel. We have been given more, and more is required of us.

A CRAFTY PROPOSAL IS SUBMITTED

“ 6 Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7 All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions . 8 Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 9 Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.”

Now the wicked join “hand in hand ” (Prov 11:21; 16:5) against the man of God. It is a well thought conspiracy, and Daniel’s enemies are persuaded it will work for their good. However, there is one thing they have failed to take into consideration – and that because they were not able to do so. They failed to reckon upon the God of Daniel. They knew Daniel was devoted to his God, but had no idea of how God was devoted to Daniel!

WE HAVE ALL CONSULTED

“Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together . . .” Other versions refer to “All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors,” NKJV “All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors,” NASB and “The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors.” NIV

Everyone is said to be represented except Daniel – the chief president of them all. So “all” the presidents were not there, only two of them. However, they spoke as though Daniel had concurred with the proposal they are about to make. They had met together and drawn up a bill for the king’s signature. It would be presented as though the king’s best interests were being considered. There was, supposedly, perfect unanimity among the appointed officials, and thus the proposal is submitted in a context of seeming interest and unity. However, it is not at all what it appears to be.

A ROYAL STATUTE

“ . . . to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree , that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king . . . ”

A Royal Statute

A “royal statute” is an edict from the king – a sovereign decree to be imposed upon the people. Among men, it carries unquestionable authority.

A Firm Decree

A “firm decree” is an edict that will be enforced. Some form of legal monitoring will accompany the decree, and

those who violate it will be punished.

A Thirty-day Law Concerning Petitions

Other versions read, “whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king” NKJV “anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den,” NIV and “Give orders that for the next thirty days anyone who prays to anyone, divine or human-- except to Your Majesty.” NLT

Behold how cunningly the petition is presented. His enemies did not condemn Daniel, his practice, or his God. Also, this was the beginning of a new reign. Therefore the petition is presented so as to draw attention to the new king, and away from any competing interests.

These wicked men were not testing Daniel to see if he would really pray to his God. They already knew he would. This was designed to cast a different light upon his devotion, making it appear as though it was rebellion.

Here was a royal statute, bound upon the entire realm because of a single man. The aim of this proposal was not to uncover others in the realm who prayed to God. The sole purpose of this recommendation was to condemn Daniel. From the standpoint of the officials who put it forward, there was no other reason for it.

We see here to what length the devil will go to harass and condemn the people of God. This provides some further insight into the Apostolic warning. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet 5:8).

THE PENALTY ESTABLISHED

“ . . . he shall be cast into the den of lions . . . ” Thus the proposal provides for the sure death of anyone who violates the imposed decree. A request cannot be presented to anyone other than Darius the king. No supplication of any sort can be made of any God or man. Only Darius may be asked for anything.

The decree was for a thirty day period, for Daniel’s enemies knew there was no possible way for him to refrain from praying for that length of time. Also, there was no need to make the law perpetual. These men were not seeking to establish a governmental policy. Rather, they were seeking to rid themselves of the presence of Daniel. It made no difference to them if anyone else prayed to the God of heaven or not.

SIGN THE WRITING

“Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.”

Establish and Sign the Decree

Like all executive orders, it must have the royal signature upon it. The signature of Darius would make the matter law. Immediately, Daniel’s enemies would engage in a vigil to catch Daniel praying to his God. They knew he could not change his manner, not even because of a king’s decree!

The Law of the Medes and Persians

A similar representation of the law of the Medes and Persians is found in the book of Esther. “Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse ” (Esth 8:8).

The signed decree, therefore, was cast in stone, and could not, under any circumstances, be reversed. The foes of Daniel knew they had to have a law like this in order to condemn the man of God. Now they were confident of realizing success in their diabolical plan. Their hearts must have leaped with carnal joy.

DANIEL'S RESPONSE

“ 10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. 11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.”

Now comes the third test of Daniel's faith. It is different than the other tests. In the first test, when but a young man, his faith was tested when an unlawful diet was imposed upon him (1:3-8). In the second test, he was condemned along with all the other wise men of Babylon when king Nebuchadnezzar dreamed a dream he could not remember (2:13-18). Now, his faith is tested by a mandate that forbids him to pray to his God – a decree that outlaws asking anything from the God of heaven. Is there anything familiar about a law like this? Has not our own government passed a similar law – except it is not for a mere thirty days!

The record of Daniel's response is written for our learning. It is designed to teach us that no person or law can be permitted to mitigate or modify our devotion to the Lord of glory. In Daniel we will see faithfulness and steadfastness lived out to the finest detail.

WHEN DANIEL KNEW

“ 10a Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed . . . ” Other versions read, “Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published,” NIV and “when Daniel learned that the law had been signed.” NLT

Daniel was not, therefore, present when this whole matter was presented to the king. He heard of the decree only after it had been signed into law. How will such an imposition impact upon his manner of life? How will it effect the aged prophet?

The Impact of the Decree

Lest we overlook the impact of the king's decree, consider its import. No one could ask God for help for thirty days. For one full month, by law, Daniel could not ask God for understanding or wisdom . Grace could not be requested from God, nor direction , for thirty days. No forgiveness could be sought, no “ daily bread, ” and no deliverance requested. All such requests must be addressed to Darius. All of these things were needed – even on a daily basis. For all practical purposes, Daniel was being asked to forget God for thirty days. By the law of the Medes and the Persians, for thirty days,

he could not associate a single one of his needs or quests with the God of heaven.

For some, that would not be too unreasonable. How will such a demand be regarded by a man who lives by faith?

THREE TIMES A DAY

The edict covered a period of thirty days. Within that time frame a single violation will result in the violator being thrown into a den of lions. The threat is very real, and there is no court of appeals, or provision for registering a complaint about the injustice of the decree. There are no “civil rights,” and no organization to plead the case of the people to the king. In fact, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, it is not possible for the signed proclamation to be reversed. Now, how will a decree like that effect the prophet Daniel?

We must remember that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and that “prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” NKJV (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21). In this text, therefore, the Holy Spirit moves Daniel to write about himself. This is not something he took upon himself. Rather, his response was so notable before the Lord, that the Holy Spirit moved him to write it in Scripture for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

I say this because some sophists have stumbled at men writing about themselves in Scripture. Other examples include Moses, who wrote that he was “very meek, above all men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num 12:3). John also wrote that he was “that disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20). These accounts, as well as that of Daniel, were not self-assessments. They were written by Divine inspiration, and must be so regarded.

He Went Into His House

“ 10b . . . he went into his house. . .” Immediately we see the decree had not the slightest impact upon Daniel’s demeanor. It is as though he held utter disdain for a decree that forbade him to ask a petition of his God for thirty days. He did not go into the market place, or the king’s palace, but to into his own house. That is where he was accustomed to praying, and he will not alter his manner.

Toward Jerusalem

“ 10c . . . and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem . . .” Daniel does not hide what he is doing. He does not close the windows so none can see him praying, for that was not his custom. He would rather lose his life than alter a single facet of his life toward the Living God. He will not bow to the king’s decree, just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s image. He will not dishonor his God by closing his windows, but he has no compunctions about dishonoring the kingly edict by leaving them open.

However, his windows are not merely opened, they are open “toward Jerusalem.” There is no question about Daniel’s familiarity with Scripture. He was doubtless fully acquainted with Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Temple. There the wise king besought the Lord to remember prayers that were prayed toward their land, and particularly facing the Temple of God. That marvelous prayer contained at least five references to such prayers.

- IN THE NORMALITIES OF LIFE. “And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive” (1 Kgs 8:30).

- IN TIMES OF CALAMITY. “When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them; Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance” (1 Kgs 8:35-36).
- A SEEKING STRANGER. “Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name” (1 Kgs 8:41-43).
- IN TIMES OF BATTLE. “If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause” (1 Kgs 8:44-45)
- WHILE CAPTIVES IN ANOTHER LAND. “Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, 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 Kgs 8:47-49)

David also mentioned this manner of praying – toward Jerusalem and the Temple. “But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple” (Psa 5:7). Jonah also did the same. “Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple” (Jonah 2:4).

Thus Daniel, in the land of captivity, did precisely what Solomon had presented to the Lord. He prayed “toward Jerusalem,” the holy city, and toward the Temple of the Lord. Although he was in a strange land, his heart was in his homeland. He adjusted his circumstances to assist him to remember the city where God had placed His name (1 Kgs 11:36). By so doing, Daniel demonstrated that although he was in Babylon, and had been for many years, yet he remained a stranger in it. His citizenship was elsewhere.

Daniel was not praying to be seen of men, but was praying according to his usual manner. He did not alter it in any way – even though he was breaking the law of the land in doing so.

Upon His Knees

“10d . . . he kneeled upon his knees . . .” The posture of the aged prophet reminds me of Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the Temple. Then Solomon “kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven” (2 Chr 6:13). Following his prayer Solomon “arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven” (1 Kgs 8:54).

This is a standard posture for people of God, and has been throughout history. Traditionally, and in hours of great need, godly men have humbled themselves before the Lord by kneeling.

- EZRA. “And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees , and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God” (Ezra 9:5).
- JESUS. “And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down , and prayed” (Luke 22:41).
- STEPHEN. “And he kneeled down , and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:60).
- PETER. “But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down , and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up” (Acts 9:40).
- PAUL. “And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down , and prayed with them all” (Acts 20:36). “And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed” (Acts 21:5). “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 3:14).

Three Times A Day

“ 10e . . . three times a day, and prayed . . . ” Daniel’s prayers were formal as well as fervent, and frequent as well. He not only refused to alter the manner in which he prayed, he did not reduce the number of his daily prayers. Like the parents of Moses, he was “not afraid of the king’s command” (Heb 11:23). He could confess with David, “I will not fear what flesh can do unto me” (Psa 56:4), and “I will not fear what man can do unto me” (Psa 118:6). He had the spirit of Isaiah, who was inspired to write, “Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread” (Isa 8:13).

Three times a day Daniel faced Jerusalem, knelt before the Lord, and prayed. Throughout Scripture there are frequent references to three-fold prayers.

- When Elijah raised the widows son from the dead, he prayed “three times” (1 Kgs 17:21).
- David prayed three times a day: “evening, morning, and noon” (Psa 55:17).
- Jesus prayed the same prayer three times in Gethsemane (Matt 26:39-44).
- Paul prayed three times that his thorn in the flesh might be removed (2 Cor 12:8).

In praying three times a day, Daniel confirmed his dependency upon the Lord as well as His familiarity with Him. He was not willing to forfeit one of these times in order to please the king or save his life. I cannot conceive of him doing this out of a sense of obligation. Rather, this was an aspect of Daniel living by faith. He would not exclude the Lord from a solitary segment of a single day.

Application

Most Christians could have a great deal more discipline when it comes to the matter of prayer. They are too slipshod in this aspect of the faith-life, praying only in times of crisis. Such individuals would find it easy to acquiesce with the laws of the land against prayer. They could no doubt cite many practical reasons for giving in to the pressure of

the government. But when all is said and done, God has provided us a record of a man unwilling to yield the smallest allegiance to the king at the expense of his life Godward. That is the circumstance the Lord chose to sanctify to our minds.

There are numerous incidents in Scripture of people who refused to obey the laws of the land – laws that went against the God of heaven and trust in him.

- The Egyptian midwives refused to obey the king in killing the newborn Hebrew males (Ex 1:17).
- Moses' parents refused to obey the king's command, sparing and protecting the infant Moses (Ex 2:2-10; Heb 11:23).
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to bow before Nebuchadnezzar's golden image (Dan 3:18).
- The Apostles, when commanded to do so, refused to stop preaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18-20).

When the government requires believers to alter their faith-life, it is not to be dignified with obedience. It is ever true, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

He Gave Thanks as Before

"10f . . . prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. . . ." Even though a law had been passed specifically against him, Daniel not only prayed but was "giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before ." NIV

A Unique Kind of Prayer

Here is a view of prayer not generally found among the heathen. There are some few occasions in Scripture of wicked men praising their gods. Belshazzar and his wicked host did this (Dan 5:4,23). The Philistines sacrificed to their god and rejoiced saying, "Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand" (Judg 16:23,24).

Most of the prayers to false gods are for deliverance – and they are all vain (Judges 10:14; Isa 44:17; 45:20; 46:7; Jonah 1:5). Thanksgiving is not normal for idolaters. Even when it is offered, it is based upon delusion, for their false gods are "the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell" (Deu 4:28). In fact, the heathen, who know not God, are noted for a their lack of thanksgiving (Rom 1:21).

Thanksgiving is the acknowledgment of a living and powerful God, whose will is executed for the benefit of His people. Therefore, Daniel not only prayed with "supplications," but gave thanks as well – even under great duress and relentless opposition.

THEY FOUND HIM PRAYING

"11 Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God."

This was the hour Daniel's enemies had been waiting for. They knew Daniel would not stop praying. They were fully aware that the powerful edict from one of the most influential kings of history would not move him to make the slightest alternation in practice.

As a group, they came and witnessed the prophet praying before his open window three times a day, while facing Jerusalem. The law they had drawn up and had the king sign forbade any petition to be made to anyone but Darius for thirsty days. When they came to Daniel's house, they heard him "praying and asking God for help." NIV I gather from this that Daniel was lifting up his voice. Now, his enemies have heard him.

AN APPLICATION

There are still people within the church who alter their manners, once dictated by their faith, to please men. Some do it because they are afraid of the repercussions of godly manners. Others do it to court the friendship of those who have actually rejected the Son of God and prefer this world to the world to come. Such people would think nothing of closing their window, or ceasing the customs they once thought necessary. It would never enter their minds to refuse to acquiesce with the judgment of sinners.

We are living in a time when the church is more and more altering its manner. Gradually its quest to please God is being supplanted by an accommodation to this present evil world. It is caving in to the threats of the world, and catering more and more to its demands. These constitute "perilous times."

Unless these trends are abandoned, the judgment of God in some form will be forthcoming. God will not long endure those who are more afraid of men than of Him, and who alter their manners to please their foes instead of to serve Him – particularly when they have identified themselves as His people.

THE ENEMIES REPORT

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

Daniel's enemies do not wait for the word to get back to the king. They eagerly rush to him with their facts in hand, thinking to at last rid themselves of the man of God. They have the spirit of the raging kings of the Second Psalm. "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Psa 2:3).

They do not have the slightest notion that they are opposing God, and heaping up His wrath against themselves. They do not believe Daniel's God can protect him. They actually believe they have struck upon a sure way to bring Daniel down to disgrace and death. But they are wrong, and so is every person who thinks they can devise successful devices against the people of God. It has always been true, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

Sometimes it may appear as though this is not true. The prophet Zechariah may be killed in the very sanctuary of God (2 Chron 24:20-22; Lk 11:51). John the Baptist may be beheaded (Matt 14:10). Stephen may be stoned (Acts 7:58). In

those case, what seemed to be successful was only possible because the work of those dear brethren had been completed. As we will see, Daniels' work is not yet finished, and therefore this malicious plot will not be successful.

Thus the people of God must not fear what men can do unto them. Rather, they are to devote themselves to the work they have been given to do, trusting in the Lord with all of their heart, and seeking help from Him as Daniel did.

CONCERNING THE KING'S DECREE

“ 12a Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?”

Behold their subtlety. At first they make no mention of Daniel, but draw attention to the kingly edict, as though the whole thing was Darius' idea. First they will ensure the king's mind is turned toward his own decree and his own power.

Do Not Underestimate the Enemy!

It is imperative that the saints refuse to underestimate the craftiness or commitment of their enemies. They are so cunning and so insistent that it will require God to deliver us from them!

See how quickly Daniel's enemies run to the king, wasting no time. They do not wait for the next day to level their charge, but get to the evil work immediately. They do not enter the king's court in a flush of rage, but with seeming interest for the welfare of the kingdom, and with the king's reputation apparently held high. In so doing, they are following the manner of their father the devil, who also endeavors to present a sound case against the people of God (Job 1:11; 2:5; Zech 3:1; Matt 4:6).

These shrewd opponents of the man of God are very thorough in their presentation. Did the king sign the decree? Did the decree forbid every man to ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days? Were not all petitions to be addressed to him, and that without fail? Was not the penalty clearly established that all violators would be thrown into a den of lions?

Application

Many a professed believer has been overcome because he confronted the enemy in his own strength, thinking himself equal to the adversary of our souls. Whether we are considering the devil himself, or those who are working in league with him, we must take seriously the word of the Lord. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Pet 5:8-9).

It is good to remember that your enemies will lose no time in opposing you. If you make a practice of delaying your prayers, being “slow of heart,” and tardy in your responses to God, you WILL be overcome.

IT IS TRUE

“ 12b . . . The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.”

The king answering immediately, affirms this had been done in strict accord with the law of the Medes and the Persians. He also declares that was a law that could not under any circumstances be altered, nullified, or changed. It appears he has no idea that there has been any violation of his decree. In fact, he may have even thought these counselors were going to ask for some sort of modification of the law. Therefore, he quickly reminds them it is unchangeable.

That is precisely what Daniel's enemies wanted to hear. Now they will present their charge against Daniel.

DANIEL IS CHARGED

“ 13 Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.”

“That Daniel”

Behold with what utter disdain they refer to the man of God: “THAT Daniel.” This is the Daniel the king had exalted to be over them. It is the Daniel the king had planned to place over the whole kingdom. Now “that Daniel,” upon whom such favor had been placed, had been found in violation of the unchangeable law of the land!

Of the Captivity of Judah

Further attention is drawn to Daniel by pointing out he is really not one of “us” – he is a foreigner in the land. But he is no mere visitor or sojourner. He is one of the “captives” of a military campaign. Disobedience to the king would not be allowed from any Mede or Persian. It surely would not be allowed from any Babylonian, whose nation had recently been conquered by Darius. Much less, therefore, should insolence be tolerated from a captive man from Judah.

Does Not Regard Thee

Thus Daniel is represented as having no regard or respect for the king. All the more, considering his position, should Daniel be required to honor the word of the king! He had been exalted and given special favor. Now he has shown his true colors by thinking more of his God than of the one who exalted him to prominence and favor. According to his enemies, Daniel “pays no attention to you . . . or to the decree you put in writing.” NASB These words are calculated to stir up the anger of the king, whose authority, it is affirmed, has been deliberately challenged by Daniel.

Three Times a Day

These foes are not presenting a single violation of the law, although that would be sufficient to incur condemnation. Daniel has not disobeyed the king once, but is doing so three times every day! In a month he would break the law ministry times! He is, according to these men, living in a state of rebellion against the king, disdain for his person, and disobedience to his law. Surely, the enemies must reason, this will turn the king against Daniel.

**FOOLISH FOR THE FLESH,
BUT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GOD TO WORK**

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

Now the king suddenly perceives he has, in fact, been trapped – moved to make a foolish decree. He should have been more alert to the vileness of these counselors – but it was too late now. A real dilemma has now been created by a foolish decree.

DISPLEASED WITH HIMSELF

“ 14 Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself . . . ” The words of the decree, actually framed by the officials and designed to make the king displeased with Daniel, instead made him displeased with himself – “sore displeased,” or “deeply distressed.” NASB Other versions read, “the king was very angry with himself for signing the law,” NLT and “The king was deeply grieved at this news.” NAB

The king had acted in haste, relying too much on the wisdom of his counselors. His pride had gotten the best of him, moving him to make a foolish decree, like Jephthah made a foolish vow (Judges 11:30-36). It is interesting that the king was not displeased with his wicked counselors who put forth the suggestion in the first place. However, because he is the king, and because he should have been more wise, he is presently “sorely displeased” with himself. The great weight of responsibility rested upon him, and he knew it.

At this point, the king does not yet see the intentions of the counselors was not to bring the king’s honor, but rather the destruction of Daniel. However, this will become apparent to him later (6:24).

Application

King Darius was not the last person to become displeased when facing the consequences of his own decision. At some time, nearly all people have had to face the results of foolish decisions, words, and deeds. We do well to learn from accounts like this to live in the power of faith instead of the wisdom of men, or the emotion of the moment.

There is a natural decline in the human capacity to think, respond, and purpose. When men are not motivated by faith and the fear of the Lord, they tend to become foolish. When they move away from thought and due consideration into the realm of feeling and emotion, they become more foolish still. If they are moved by the thoughts and emotions of others rather than their own, they fall into a bottomless pit of corruption. It is time to bring faith, and thinking that is motivated by faith, into a prominent position in the churches. There is no need for those in Christ to fall into the same snare as Darius the Mede.

HE TRIED TO DELIVER DANIEL

“ . . . and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.” Other versions read, “ set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him,” NASB “he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him,” NIV and “he tried to find a way to save Daniel. He spent the rest of the day looking for a way to get Daniel out of this predicament.” NLT

Within a very brief period of time, Daniel had fully justified the king's trust in him. You may recall Nebuchadnezzar made no effort to save Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego from the fiery furnace. Nor, indeed, did he seek a way to exonerate them or change the law he had made. But this was not the case with Darius. He was diligent to find any way possible to "get Daniel out of this predicament." This reveals what a high estimation he placed upon the man of God.

We are not told what measures he sought. Perhaps he tried to find some technicality in the law that would allow for the edict to be changed. Maybe he sought a precedent for treating an exceptional man differently. At any rate, no way was found.

This is a most remarkable incident. Here was a monarch with unspeakable power, yet he could not set aside the law of the land. Not only that, this law had been devised by calculating men, who were seeking the removal of a single individual.

In some ways, the incident is similar to Pilate's trying of Jesus Christ. After being warned by his wife to have nothing to do with "this just man," Pilate sought to find a convenient way to release Jesus, but could find none that suited him. In his case, the law of the land was not the point, but the will of the people. However, in both the case of Pilate and that of Darius, the Lord was working behind the scenes. The mighty God of heaven was orchestrating the affairs of men in order to bring glory to His holy name.

A SAD REMINDER

" 15 Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed."

When the men realized the king was having second thoughts on the matter, they gathered together for the final assault. They threw the law of the Medes and Persians in his face. "Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, 'Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.'" NIV Now they press the battle, showing the wickedness of their own hearts. They are intimidated by the presence and person of Daniel, and will spare no effort to get rid of him.

In giving this subtle reminder, these men are suggesting Darius' reputation will be tarnished if he goes against the law of his own people. As the rumor of his vacillation circulated through the empire, a great disrespect would no doubt be developed for him. How are people to feel about a king who changes his mind, and does not abide by the law he himself professes to honor?

Thus right and wrong are no longer the issue. The law, in this case, has superseded morality. It now requires the death of a man who has done nothing that is of itself wrong or immoral.

That, of course, is the nature of the governments and kings of this world. Eventually, they are willing to do what is wrong in order to maintain their own popularity and position among men. Thus in the Revelation, John is shown a depiction of world government that shows it to be a ruthless "beast" (Rev 13:1-2). That is precisely why the Kingdom of God will decimate every single one of them, just as God has declared. "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush

and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever” (Dan 2:44). Those who have an inordinate affection for the governments of this world, regardless of their origin and present manner, do well to remember this.

THE STAGE IS SET

Thus the stage is set for the working of the Lord. He has dried up every human resource, and taken away every conceivable way to deliver Daniel in the flesh, or by human authority. Now, the events are set for the Lord to work for His own glory, the deliverance of Daniel, and the edifying of His people. The Lord will reveal His devotion to and consistent love for His people.

CONCLUSION

Is it really true, “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake” (Mat 5:10-11)? Indeed it is! This passage will affirm that the decisions of our enemies are not the final word. The laws of the land, corrupt though they may be and powerful though their rulers may be, are not the determining factor. God IS the “Governor among the nations” (Psa 22:28). He does according to His will “among the inhabitants of the earth,” which before Him “are reputed as nothing” (Dan 4:35). The Lord DOES “know how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished” (2 Pet 2:9). That is a reality our hearts must grasp.

Even though Darius was kindly disposed toward Daniel, it would have been entirely out of order for the prophet to trust him, or put his confidence in him. It is still true, “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man” (Psa 118:8). That is true even if men are inclined toward us, and energetically seek ways to benefit us. Eventually, all men are like Darius – they are helpless to do what God alone can do. No amount of earthly learning or influence can change that condition. They cannot effect deliverance, even though they are in positions of authority and have great influence and power. Faith must be in God, with whom all things are possible! It is marvelous to be persuaded of this.

Daniel knew this, and depended upon it. Darius did not. Daniel knew this, the Babylonian wise men did not. The question is, do you know it in your heart and by faith?

The Prophecy of Daniel

DANIEL PASSES THE TEST IN FAITH

Lesson #18

INTRODUCTION

After a period of obscurity, Daniel was called to a nighttime feast that was interrupted by a Divine intrusion. That very night he was exalted, and the one who exalted him was slain. Also, during that eventful evening, the kingdom of Babylon fell, as the city was besieged by a horde of Medes. Darius, fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, took the kingdom, which was given to him by God Almighty.

Although Belshazzar lost his life, and Babylon its supremacy, Daniel was suddenly vaulted to the leading official of the land. He was the chief president among three, to whom all of the princes of the land reported. In the wake of his sudden promotion, king Darius made plans to promote him over the whole realm. The news of this moved Daniel's enemies to draft a special law, suited for him alone, and deliver it to the king for signature. That law forbade anyone to ask a petition of any deity or man for thirty days. The penalty for breaking that law was to be thrown into a den of lions.

With the opening of this text, Daniel has been found guilty of praying to His God in spite of the king's decree. He has not prayed one time, but three times a day. Darius has made every effort to find a way to deliver Daniel, but was not able to do so. Now, from a human point of view, all hope has withered and died. Yet, faith is not cast down to the ground.

THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME

This is not the first time in this book that no hope could be seen from the human point of view. It is the Divine manner to remove all hope in the flesh before delivering His people. This is seen in Noah and the ark (Gen 6), Abraham offering up Isaac (Gen 22), the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Ex 12), the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14-15), and the sustaining of the Israelites in the wilderness (Deut 8:15-16). But it has also been seen repeatedly in this book.

- Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are taken captive to Babylon, and placed under the control of a Babylonian prince (1:-6-7).
- Azariah, prince of the eunuch, turns down Daniel's request for a special diet, that he not defile himself (1:10).
- The four children of Judah must appear physically and mentally better before the king, although they limited themselves to a plain diet (1:16).
- Although young Hebrews, these four were compared with the wisest men in Babylon (1:19-20).
- Daniel asks for time to obtain insight into the dream of Nebuchadnezzar – what the king dreamed, and what it meant (2:16-17).
- As a young man, Daniel is made ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon (2:48).
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow to the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar, even though they would be thrown into a burning fiery furnace as a result (3:12-18).
- Daniel is asked to interpret another of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams after all others had failed (4:18).

- Daniel is asked to read and interpret supernatural writing that appeared on the palace wall at Belshazzar's feast (5:13-15; 25:28).
- Daniel is exalted the same night Belshazzar is killed and Babylon is overthrown (5:30-31).

Which of these events could be successfully addressed in the flesh? What natural ability could possible have made Daniel and his colleagues equal to these challenges? Every possible fleshly advantage was taken away, and only hope in God remained.

Only faith was adequate for these occasions, and only faith will be adequate for the situation Daniel now faces.

Because this point is so rarely emphasized in our religious culture, I must take a moment to further develop it. Faith does what nothing else can do. It does not combine with any other human quality to accomplish its work, but rests in God alone. How poignantly this is brought out in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. The following things were accomplished "by faith," which is the engine that drives the soul.

- Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, thereby obtaining witness that he was righteous (11:4).
- Enoch was translated without experiencing death (11:4).
- Noah prepared an ark to the saving of his house, thereby condemning the world and becoming an heir of righteousness by his faith (11:7).
- Abraham left his home land, and journeyed to a land, not knowing whither he went (11:8).
- Abraham journeyed in a promised land as in a strange land, looking for a city whose builder and maker is God (11:9-10).
- Sarah received strength to conceive a child in her old age, even though she was barren (11:11).
- Ancient believers died in faith, not having seen the promise of God fulfilled, yet were persuaded of its truth (11:13).
- Abraham moved to offer up Isaac as he was commanded, even though God had promised to bless the

world through that very son (11:17-18).

- While in a strange land, Jacob blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come (11:20).
- When he was dying, Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph while worshiping God (11:22).
- Moses' parents hid the infant Moses, keeping him alive, even though the king had ordered him to be killed (11:23).
- When he came of age, Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing suffering over temporary exaltation (11:24-25).
- Moses forsook Egypt, was not afraid of the king, and endured while seeing Him who is invisible (11:27).
- The Israelites passed through the Red Sea on dry land (11:29).
- The walls of Jericho fell down flat after Israel walked around them for seven days (11:30).
- Rahab survived the destruction of Jericho, even though she lived there, and God had commanded it be thoroughly destroyed (11:31).

Who is the person willing to affirm such things are in any way possible to the flesh? Who cannot see that all hope in the flesh had disappeared when these things were accomplished?

Now we will behold yet another example of the invincibility of faith. It is still "the victory that overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4-5) – in fact, it is the ONLY victory that overcomes the world.

Whatever neutralizes faith, or pushes it into the background, jeopardizes the saints, robbing them of their resources! There are no Divine resources that are not appropriated by faith, and faith alone can hold them and use them. See now how Daniel will live this out, and take to heart what is declared. This is an example of living by faith – an example that can, if received, bolster confidence and assurance, and strengthen the spiritual fabric of your character.

DANIEL IS CAST INTO THE DEN OF LIONS

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

The king has been shaken by the persistence of his nobles. Although he personally regrets the dilemma of Daniel, he can find no legal way to deliver him from the judgment he has pronounced.

Some Preliminary Observations

It should be obvious that care must be taken not to allow others to frame the decisions we make, and the circumstances under which they are to be carried out. That is to be our normal demeanor. However, as in our text, there will be times when adverse circumstances have actually been orchestrated by God Himself. I want to draw attention to this reality because of the nature of our text.

We are reading of the working of the Lord, not the mere reaction of God to the working of Darius and his nobles. From the highest perspective, the affairs of men are being managed from heaven. I do not care to say that every single detail of human existence is determined by God. However, insofar as the activities of mortals bear upon the purpose of God, they are under His immediate management. A few examples will suffice to buttress this point to our hearts. I will confine these examples to occasions that are specifically declared to have been caused by God.

- REHOBAM rejected the counsel of older and wiser men, “for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat” (1 Kgs 12:15).
- JOSHUA is said to have made war for a long time against the kings of Canaan, because there was not a city that made peace with them. The Holy Spirit explains that circumstance in these words: “For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favor, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses” (Josh 11:20).
- SAMSON once sought a wife from among the Philistines. His parents rebuked him, saying he should seek a wife from among the chosen people. Once again, the Spirit explains the situation: “But his father and his mother knew not that it was of the LORD, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel” (Judges 14:4).
- DAVID once numbered Israel, causing a great plague to come against them. One text affirms that Satan “provoked David to number Israel” (1 Chron 21:1). Another credits the deed to David’s own will (2 Sam 24:3-4). However, over and above it all, the Lord was at work. It is written, “And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah” (2 Sam 24:1).

- AHAB once called his prophets to inquire about where he should go. The prophets all united, telling him to go up to Ramothgilead and surely he would prosper (1 Kgs 22:12). However, an inspired prophet named Micaiah revealed what had really occurred. “Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee” (1 Kgs 22:20-23).

Thus God is represented as working “all things according to the counsel of His own will” (Eph 1:11). This is a high view, and relates to the execution of an eternal purpose, not the mere minutia of daily life. In this text, God is ordering the affairs of Darius’ kingdom in order to provide His people a lasting example of His power and protection. This is an example of God working all things together for the good – not only the good of Daniel, but ours as well.

DANIEL IS CAST IN THE DEN

“Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions.” Another version reads, “So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den.” NIV

The word of the king was carried out immediately. You will note they had no difficulty finding Daniel. He did not hide, or flee from the country. There are times when leaving the country is proper, as when Moses fled from Egypt (Ex 2:15). There are times when the city must be left, as when Saul left Damascus by being lowered over the wall in a basket (Acts 9:25). In both of those cases, however, the work of the individuals was intended to be in another area. In our text, the work of Daniel has not yet been completed in Babylon. He sensed this, and therefore stayed where he was.

This is the same attitude Paul promoted to those who were caught in the dilemma of slavery. “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather ” (1 Cor 7:20-21). Until the Lord calls us to another area, it is wise to remain where we are! This is precisely what Daniel does. He abides with God where he is.

A WORD OF COMFORT FROM THE KING

“Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee.”

Before the sentence is carried out, Darius has a word for Daniel. It is a good word, and was obviously given to the king by God Himself, though Darius probably was not aware of it. Before Daniel is thrown into the den of lions, God gives him a word, speaking it through the very king through whom his sentence had been issued.

Thy God

Darius recognized the God of heaven as Daniel's God. He was not Daniel's God by ownership, but by profession and service. Darius was aware of Daniel's devotion to the Lord by his refusal to cease to pray because of a kingly edict. Over and above the country in which he lived, and the king whom he served, Daniel had a God.

Serving Continually

Other versions read, "whom you constantly serve," NASB and ". . . whom you serve continually," NIV "whose servant you are at all times ," BBE and "whom you have served so faithfully ." NJB

Daniel would not alter his life toward God because of the demands of men. He constantly, or continually, served God. Great men and women of faith do not serve God by fits and starts. Faith must be consistent to be effective, and faith alone can empower a person to serve God "continually."

You will note this was a trait for which Daniel was noted. This was the sense in which the Lord was Daniel's God. He was the One Daniel chose to serve, willingly, heartily, and continually.

Deliverance Will Come

Other versions read, " will Himself deliver you," NASB "May your God . . . rescue you," NIV and, " will have to save you." NJB

As you can see, there is a wide variety of meanings conveyed in the various translations. In the KJV and NASB versions, the implication is that Darius affirmed God would, in fact, deliver Daniel from the lions. In the NIV, NRSV, and RSV, the deduction is that Darius was expressing his personal desire that this would happen. In the NJB, the suggestion is that only Daniel's God is capable of delivering him from this judgment. There is a significant difference in these meanings. Was Darius confident God would deliver Daniel? Or, was this a mere wish he entertained because of the blunder he had made in passing the law? Or, was he saying all human hope was lost, and only a Deity could now deliver him?

Again, we must bring the Lord into our thinking. This book is about His working, and the central man in the text is Daniel, whom God has supported and vindicated until this very moment. If Daniel is merely recounting an historical record, then we might well imagine this was an expression of Darius' desire: i.e., "I hope your God will deliver you." However, if this word is actually said for Daniel's benefit, then it is God speaking to the prophet through the king. Whether Darius was fully aware of the capabilities of Daniel's God is really beside the point. What he desired for Daniel is also beside the point. This word was spoken for Daniel's benefit, and as a prelude to his deliverance.

We know from what follows that Darius was not himself confident God would deliver Daniel. He spent a sleepless night over this whole incident, thus confirming he had no confidence Daniel would be delivered (v 18). He also arose the next morning, going quickly to the den and asking if God was, in fact, able to deliver Daniel (v 20). I conclude, therefore, that God spoke these words through Darius, without his full knowledge of their significance. They were not the expression of a mere wish. In this case, the Lord spoke through Darius like he did through Caiaphas. Neither Caiaphas nor Darius spoke on their “own initiative” NASB (John 11:49-51). God was working things together for Daniel’s good.

The nobles were against Daniel alone. Therefore, the decree that went out was against him. The judgment of the king was against the man of God. Yet, God was for Daniel, and therefore none could effectually be against him. Thus the Lord got this word of comfort to Daniel, uttering it through the very man who was condemning him. God was working for Daniel’s good.

THE DEN IS SECURED, AND ALL FLESHLY HOPE IS LOST

“ 17 And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.”

Here the Lord sets the stage for the furtherance of His own glory. He will confirm the foolishness of the wisdom of men, and the ultimate futility of their power and authority. He will also show us the effectiveness of faith, which connects us with Omnipotence.

A proper understanding of this will confirm to our hearts that “It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man” (Psa 118:8), and “vain is the help of man” (Psa 60:11). The awareness of this will move the believer to say with David, “In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me” (Psa 56:11).

A STONE AND A SIGNET

“And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords . . .”

A Stone

Every seeming advantage will now be taken from Daniel. Not only is he thrown into a den of hungry lions, he will be sealed in the tomb by a large stone. You will remember the tomb of Jesus also had a stone placed over its entrance. It was, however, different from this stone. The stone of Jesus tomb was “rolled” over the door, signifying it stood vertically over an entrance into which one walked (Matt 27:60). You may recall the women entered the tomb of Jesus, as well as Peter and John (Mk 16:5; John 20:3-6).

But the “den of lions” was different from the sepulcher of Jesus. The stone as “laid upon the mouth of the den,” indicating it was a pit in the ground. Evidently the den was deep enough the lions could not leap out of it, nor Daniel climb out of it. Nevertheless, to make it even more secure, a stone was placed over the opening, removing all human hope of escape by Daniel, or rescue by any friends.

His Own Signet

A signet was a sort of royal signature that confirmed the validity of a decree or act. Its affixation on a document or article meant the power and authority of the king was behind the matter. Any violation of a decree that bore the king’s signet was considered treason against the king. Men who had signet rings include Judah (Gen 38:18), Ahasuerus (Esth 3:10,12), Pharaoh (who gave it to Joseph – Gen 42:42), and Ahab (1 Kgs 21:8).

Christ’s tomb was also marked with a seal (Matt 27:66).

The Signet of His Lords

Each of the nobles who had drafted the law against Daniel, also put their official consent to the deed. Although subordinate to the king, each of these nobles, or “lords,” had an area of authority. Their “signets” carried all of the power of their office. Thus the deed of Darius also became theirs. They officially validated the judgment against Daniel.

SEEMING UNCHANGEABILITY

“ . . . that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.” The purpose of the stone and its sealing was “so that Daniel's situation might not be changed.” NIV

Thus, from the human point of view, all hope has been removed. Daniel has been cast into a den of ravenous lions. A stone had been laid upon the mouth of the den, and the official signs of authority have been stamped upon the stone. As in the case of Paul the prisoner, and those on the ship with him, “all hope was taken away” (Acts 27:20).

You must see that this is God’s way of working. His deliverances are preceded by the removal of

any hope of rescue from another quarter or person. In this way He receives the proper glory. It is also necessary for deliverance to come in this way because only faith can take hold of such a salvation. Human reasoning cannot do it, nor any form of intellectual superiority.

THE KING SPENDS A SLEEPLESS NIGHT

“ 18 Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him.”

The Word of God reminds us, “the way of transgressors is hard” (Prov 13:15). Here is a case where the king has upheld an unjust law, allowing it to condemn an innocent man. He had even had twinges of conscience about it, yet has held fast to his decision. Law, while it is to be duly honored, is not above morality. It is not possible to justly defend and uphold an unjust law.

Darius will later overturn the law he passed under pressure from his nobles. From the standpoint of morality, he should have overturned it as soon as he found it unjust. But, alas, he did not, and now he will toss and turn during the night because of it.

As a consequence of his unjust decision, the king will spend a restless night. It is as though the Lord will not allow him to be comfortable while Daniel, who has faithfully served him, remains in the den of lions.

A NIGHT IN FASTING

“Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting . . .” The NIV reads, “Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating.” His deed has caused Darius to lose his appetite. First, he regretted signing the decree in the first place. Second, he lamented that he could not find a way to conveniently deliver Daniel. Third, he was filled with brokenheartedness over the whole matter. Food no longer had any appeal to him – at least not for that night.

Darius did not fast because of repentance, or in an effort to seek the God of Daniel. It was not until after Daniel is delivered that he speaks in defense of Daniel’s God. Rather, he fasted because of sorrow, and his was not sorrow “after a godly manner.” His was the “sorrow of the world” (2 Cor 7:9,10). In some respects it was comely, but only according to the flesh. Some are of the opinion that Darius spent all night in prayer for Daniel’s deliverance. I do not believe such a notion can be supported. He did

not know the God of Daniel, else he would never have chosen to uphold his decree against God's man.

NOTHING PLEASANT

“ . . . neither were instruments of music brought before him . . . ” The king refused any music, “entertainment,” NIV or other aids for sleep. His mind was dwelling on other things, and distractions were not appealing to him.

God has so made men that fundamental needs, like food and sleep, can be willingly forfeited because of thoughts being entertained by the mind. This circumstance is brought to its highest level when thoughts and words of God are embraced by the heart and mind. It is tragic that many poor souls in our culture rarely entertain such thoughts.

SLEEP COULD NOT BE HAD

“ . . . and his sleep went from him.” Other versions read, “sleep fled from him,” NASB and “he could not sleep.” NIV

In some respects, Darius does exhibit a sensitivity that is not common in our day. The thought of an innocent man suffering took his appetite and sleep from him. His mind was so full of sorrowful thoughts he could not sleep. Certainly this is just reprisal for the thoughtless decree he issued.

I see this as the hand of God upon him, and not a mere exhibition of humanness. Here is something that can bring us consolation in the time of opposition. God can cause the thoughts of people to dwell upon their mistakes, and live in deep regret of them. If it is true that He “gives His beloved sleep” (Psa 127:2), it is also true that he can take it from those who have opposed Him, whether wittingly or unwittingly. Darius is a case in point.

THE KING GOES TO THE DEN

“ 19 Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20 And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?”

Keep in mind that these events are being worked together by the Living God. They are all being channeled toward the revelation of the power and glory of God.

TO THE DEN WITH HASTE

“Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.” The king did not rush to the tomb during the evening, or in the darkness of the night. Sufficient time must be given to confirm the greatness of God. Therefore, I conclude the Lord withheld Darius from going prematurely to the den, lest Daniel’s deliverance be credited to something other than his God.

Examples of Divine Withholding

The fact that Almighty God can interfere with the decisions of men and natural occurrences should not surprise us. He has declared this aspect of His workings in His Word.

- God withheld Abimelech from touching Sarah, even though he intended to make her his wife. “And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her” (Gen 20:6).
- The Lord shut up the womb’s of all of the women in Abimelech’s house because of Sarah. “For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife” (Gen 20:18).
- God did not allow Laban to harm Jacob. “And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me” (Gen 31:7).
- As Jacob and those with him traveled, God did not allow the heathen to pursue them. “And they journeyed: and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob” (Gen 35:5).
- When Joseph was in prison, God made everything he did to prosper. “The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him, and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper” (Gen 39:23).
- When the men of Israel left the camp to meet with God three times a year, God did not allow any person to desire their land. “For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land , when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year” (Exo 34:24).
- The Lord withheld David from shedding blood and avenging himself. “Now therefore, my lord, as the

LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal ” (1 Sam 25:26).

- The Lord turns the king’s heart wherever He wills. “The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will” (Prov 21:1).
- The Lord made it impossible for Israel to find the right path, even moving them to pursue false gods, yet never find them. “Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths . And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now” (Hosea 2:6-7).

Why Say These Things?

Why is it necessary to remind the people of God of these things? Why read a text like this and then go into what appears to be a theological bypath? There are sound reasons for recalling these things to our minds.

- There is not a lot of teaching these days about this aspect of God’s working among the sons of men.
- God receives the greater glory when He is more clearly and extensively seen in the record.
- The Lord has gone to great lengths to publish among the nations His greatness. He has made Himself known as a God who makes, or causes, things happen, both for good and for evil. This has been made known in the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, the cursing of Cain, the flood, the stopping of the building of the tower of Babel, Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, the judging of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and countless other events.
- Faith in God presumes a personal persuasion of His power.

Therefore, I am affirming that Darius got up early in the morning and went to the den of lions because he was moved by God to do so. His sleepless night and pondering whether or not Daniel would be dead was owing to Divine influence, not mere natural thought.

According to the flesh, there was no reason to expect Daniel to survive the lion’s den. The king could no doubt have readily forgotten any other person thrown to those ferocious lions. Indeed, he will not have a moment of worry about some others he will throw into this den shortly.

Thus, like the women who came early to the tomb, Darius arose at the dawning of the day. The

women went to honor their Lord with spices, not knowing he had risen from the dead. Darius went to see what had happened during the night hours, during which he could not sleep.

This event is being managed by the mighty God. That is precisely why it has such edifying power. It is not possible for the people of God to be edified by random and unpurposeful events. It is the objective and result of the events that give them power to edify.

A LAMENTABLE VOICE

“And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel . . .” Other versions say he cried out with a “troubled voice,” NASB “an anguished voice,” NIV “anxiously,” NRSV “a loud cry of grief,” BBE “a mournful voice,” DARBY and “a grieved voice.” YLT

Notice, as Darius approaches the den, he has no thought of the nobles, who had formerly threatened his reputation if he did not carry out the decree they invented. On the other hand, he has exhibited no indignation with the nobles because of the decree they moved him to sign. Right now, his sole concern is Daniel, who dominates his mind. This too is the working of the Lord.

IS GOD ABLE?

“ . . . and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?”

Darius knows there is no chance the lions' demeanor could have changed apart from Divine intervention. He also knows Daniel possessed no natural ability to deal with lions, tame them, or subdue them. If Daniel is alive, there is only one reason for him being so – he had been delivered by God. If he was dead, there would also be only one reason: God did NOT deliver him.

Servant of the Living God

To my knowledge, no idol or false god is ever called “living.” The thirty references to “the living God” all refer to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Deut 5:26; Josh 3:10; 1 Sam 17:26,36; 2 Kgs 19:4,16; Psa 42:2; 84:2; Isa 37:4,17; Jer 10:10; 23:36; Dan 6:20,26; Hos 1:10; Matt 16:16; 26:63; John 6:69; Acts 14:15; Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 3:3,16; 1 Tim 3:15; 4:10; 6:17; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev 7:2). On the other hand, it is said of idols that they have “no breath” (Jer 10:14; 51:17; Hab 2:19).

The “living God” is active, has a purpose, and is noted for His words and counsel. When, therefore, Darius says Daniel a “servant of the living God,” he is not referring to a mere religious profession. Daniel's life was characterized by purpose – the doing of the revealed will of God. His heart and mind were devoted to the things God had revealed, for that is how you serve “the living God.”

Whom Thou Servest Continually

Daniel's service was not sporadic, or non-continuous. He did not blow hot and cold, but was constant in his service to the Lord. When the will of the Lord was known, Daniel shaped his life to that "will" refusing to be turned from it.

While the wicked, like those of Noah's day, have thoughts that are "only evil continually" (Gen 6:5), those with faith continually serve the Lord.

When the Lord instituted the tabernacle service, a shadow and type of what we have in Christ Jesus, He instituted continual service (Ex 28:29,30,38; Lev 24:2-4). The sacrifices were to be offered "continually." The lamp was to burn "continually." The showbread was to be on the table "continually." The truth of the matter is that God does not accept irregular or inconsistent service.

Daniel knew this, and served the Lord continually. No aspect of his life was lived independently of God. Darius had seen this, and was duly impressed by it.

Was God Able?

Other versions read, "has your God . . . been able to deliver you from the lions?" NASB "been able to rescue you from the lions?" NIV and "able to keep you safe from the lions?" BBE

There is an obvious tone of doubt in the words of Darius. This is how we know he did not intentionally declare God was going to deliver Daniel when he consigned him to the den of lions (verse 16). Yet, there is a sort of spiritual instinct in Darius that moves him to inquire further into the matter of Daniel's God. From the higher perspective, he is being moved along by the Lord. From the lower view, this is the marred, yet present, Divine image reaching out.

Darius does not have a knowledge of the Lord as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did. They affirmed, "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (Dan 3:14-18). The ability of the Almighty is not exclusively revealed through immediate rescue. Rather, deliverance depends upon His ability – and there is a vast difference between the two.

If Daniel was NOT miraculously delivered, suffering death like John the Baptist (Matt 14:10) and James (Acts 12:2), it was only because God did not will to do so. It would have nothing whatsoever to do with God's ability. Abel was killed (Gen 4:8), Joseph was spared (). Several prophets were slain by

Jezebel (1 Kgs 18:4), yet Elijah survived her malice (1 Kgs 19:10). Zechariah the prophet was stoned to death (2 Chron 24:21-22), while Elijah was miraculously translated into heaven without seeing death (2 Kgs 2:12). Stephen was stoned and died (Acts 7:59), Paul was stoned and lived (Acts 14:19-20). God's ability is NOT measured by human experience, and those who attempt to do so are in serious error. Some experience appears to contradict Divine purpose. That appearance, however, is the reflection of human frailty, not Divine intent.

As we will see, there is a heavenly objective being served by this event. God is not merely reacting to the foolish edicts of a king, or the false charges of Daniel's enemies. This whole incident is designed to teach us about the Lord, about faith in Him, and about His preeminence among the sons of men. The whole earth is "full of His glory" (Isa 6:3), and we will now be afforded a glimpse of some of that marvelous glory.

DANIEL RESPONDS

“ 21 Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22 My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.”

How will Daniel respond to the king's interrogation? His reply will testify to us of the nature of faith, and the effect of faithfulness. We will see what it means to "wait upon the Lord" (Psa 123:2), trust in Him with all of your heart (Prov 3:5-6, and be anxious for nothing (Phil 4:6). This is how faith works, how it impacts upon the heart of the believer, and how it enables the trusting one to frame his speech. We are witnessing faith in action. Let us give heed to its testimony.

A RESPECTFUL REPLY

“Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever . . .”

Daniel has spent the night with lions, but we find him calm and respectful in his answer to the king. He has not been seething in anger through the night because of the injustice and malice that has been exhibited toward him. He is not prepared to plead his case and demand vengeance upon his accusers. Instead, he speaks with the due respect for the very man who consigned him to the lion's den.

He seeks the welfare of the king, desiring that his life be unencumbered with the sort of trials he

himself has endured during the night – “O king, live for ever!”

An Example for Us

This is an excellent example of being “careful for nothing,” or being “anxious for nothing” NKJV (Phil 4:6). Care or anxiety can precede affliction, occur during difficulty, or be in the aftermath of the trial. For Daniel, it did not occur in any of those phases. He conducted himself honorably BEFORE redemption in Christ, regeneration, reconciliation to God, the new birth, the destruction of the devil, or the spoiling of principalities and powers. Daniel is among those of whom it is said, “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Heb 11:40). This is precisely why this account is so relevant to us.

The Relevance of the Account

The above circumstance is what makes this account so pertinent to us. The power of faith prior to the New Covenant is a confirmation of its potency under Christ, where it has been brought to its vertex. While the trial of the den of lions is unique, trial itself is not. The personal trials you undergo will be as challenging to your faith as Daniel’s was to his. For that reason, you have every right to expect a strong faith to sustain you just as surely as it did him. Your response to trial can be as positive as Daniel’s was to his. You have the same God, and the same faith. The difference is that in Christ you have the even greater advantages of an interceding Savior (Isa 53:12; Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25) and the indwelling Spirit who also intercedes for you (Rom 8:26-27).

AN ANGEL WAS SENT

“ My God hath sent His angel , and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me . . .” Note, Darius had asked “is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?” (V 20). Now Daniel affirms the living God to indeed be his own – his own by profession, by service, and in trust.

His Angel

Certain students of Scripture are fond of identifying “the Word” (the Person of Jesus prior to His enfleshment, John 1:1,14) with various angels mentioned in the Old Covenant writings: “angel of the Lord” (Ex 3:2), “His angel” (Dan 3:28), “angel of His presence” (Isa 63:9), “The Angel” (Gen 48:16), etc. There is neither express Scriptural teaching nor suggestion that Jesus was a servant or messenger of God to humanity prior to His entrance into the world as “Jesus,” the Savior. Angels are “ministering spirits” (Heb 1:13-14), and such an appellation is wholly inappropriate for He who was “with God and was God” (John 1:1).

While I have dealt with this subject already (Lesson #12), a single comment will suffice to affirm this angel was not the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ.

“ It is expressly stated that Savior “*took not on Him the nature of angels*” (Heb 2:16). This has particular regard to the redemption of humanity in whose likeness He came. Thus other versions read, “*For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham*” (Heb 2:16). The relevance to the matter we are discussing is apparent. The Word, as Jesus was referred to prior to becoming flesh (John 1:14), only took the form of those He came to help. If at any time He had taken the form of an angel, as some affirm, it could only have been to give assistance to angels, not men. That is something He is nowhere represented as doing. Additionally, to be made a messenger, which is the meaning of “*angel*,” the Word would be required to humble Himself, taking a lower position. To affirm that such a thing took place comes very close to blasphemy. The pre-incarnate Word is never depicted as in any way humbling Himself prior to becoming flesh in order to the salvation of men. There is not a syllable in Scripture that justifies such a conclusion.” Lesson 12

Angels Are Dispatched from Heaven

Angels do not operate on their own, but are sent from heaven and by God on special missions. They are said to “excel in strength,” “do His commandments,” and are noted for “hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Psa 103:20).

The words “He sent His angel” are found four times in Scripture.

- The deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. “Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God” (Dan 3:28).
- Daniel’s deliverance from the den of lions. “My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt” (Dan 6:22).
- Peter’s deliverance from prison. “And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews” (Acts 12:11).
- The Revelation given to John on the Isle of Patmos. “And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly be done” (Rev 22:6; 1:1).

Other instances of the commission of an angel from God to earth include:

- Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. “And when we cried unto the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt” (Num 20:16).
- The deliverance of Hezekiah from the invading hordes of Sennacherib. “And the LORD sent an angel, which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria” (2 Chr 32:21).

The presence of an angel is always dictated by the will and purpose of Almighty God. They are never said to come by, or be controlled by, the words of a mortal man. Those who speak of commanding angels and the likes have only betrayed the wickedness of their own hearts. Only God sends angels, and they only respond to His command, or those of the Son of God.

The presence of an angel in the den, therefore, confirms the Lord's personal interest in and love for Daniel. No angel ever comes to the aid of the saints without first being sent forth by the God who beholds and cares for them.

Power Over the Lions

In all of its varied forms, nature has never proved to be a problem or challenge for the holy angels. In this case, the angel simply "shut the lions' mouths."

He did not have to wrestle them down and kill them as David and Samson did (Judges 14:5-6; 1 Sam 17:34-36). The lions yielded to the angel, just as surely as Balaam's ass did (Num 22:23). The Lord says of even the wild and uncaptured beasts, "the wild beasts of the field are mine" (Psa 50:11) – and angels are empowered by God.

How this was accomplished is not explained. Perhaps they lost their hunger. The Lord might have made them afraid of Daniel, reversing the course of nature. Maybe they did not even see Daniel, but were made completely oblivious of his presence. It is even possible that they saw him, maintained their hunger, but had no zeal to attack him. Whatever explanation may be preferred, it was still the angel that brought the result, not the course of nature, or a sudden twist in nature that occurred independently of Divine intervention.

Whether Daniel saw the angel, as did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we do not know. Whether he did or not, his familiarity with the Living God brought him to the conclusion his deliverance had come from heaven. Nature does not change its course by itself. Whenever there is a departure from the course of nature, the hand of God has been present. It may be that He has allowed Satan to cause a sudden storm (Job 1:19). It may be the instant quelling of a fierce storm on the sea (Matt 8:26), or giving a man supernatural strength pull up the posts with the gates of Gaza, "bar and all," and carry them on his shoulders to the top of a hill (Judges 16:3). It is God who rules "in the kingdom of men" (Dan 4:17) , whether it is a wilderness in which Israel is journeying, a sea upon which Paul is sailing, a king's palace like that of Nebuchadnezzar, or a den of lions.

The Relevance of It All

Surely any situation that has proved to be a challenge or test to you is not greater than those recorded in scripture! This is one reason why the Word of God does not major on small incidentals, daily problems, and tests that are common to all men. Rather, the Holy Spirit places before us extreme

situations, hopeless dilemmas, and uncommon challenges, to assure our hearts that our trials are quite controllable. The children of God must learn to reason from the greater to the lesser, and not vice versa. It is in the strength of the greater than the lesser loses its power over us. But when we make an attempt to begin with life's incidentals and reason up to the higher matters of the Kingdom, we enter into confusion, and lose all confidence.

The tendency to be occupied with incidentals is a fundamental weakness in contemporary religion. Such minutia is the subject of almost all professed expertise, workshops, seminars, and the likes. It is imperative that believers become adept at living on a higher plain! You may never experience anything of the magnitude of Daniel's lions' den experience. However, if you will duly consider what happened to him, God will give you strength to honorably respond to what happens to you.

INNOCENCY BEFORE GOD

“. . . forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me . . .” Other versions read, “I was found innocent before Him,” NKJV “I was found innocent in His sight,” NIV “I was found blameless before Him,” NRSV and “before Him purity hath been found in me.” YLT

First, there are some who may affirm such a state is not possible – a state of innocency before the Lord. After all, is it not written, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23), and “there is none righteous, no not one” (Rom 3:10)? Those affirmations are true. And yet, the man of God must be noted for “handling accurately the Word of truth” NASB (2 Tim 2:15). Too often novices spout the Word of God through a maze of ignorance rather than an illuminated mind.

While it is true that no sin is recorded against Daniel, that by no means suggests he was free from all guilt. In his prayers he identified himself with those who had transgressed: “we have sinned” (9:5,8,11,15). “Innocency” being found in Daniel, therefore, does not mean he was morally and spiritually perfect – a state Paul declared he had not reached while he remained in the body (Phil 3:12).

There are several senses in which Daniel's innocency is declared.

- He was innocent concerning the charge brought against him: namely that Daniel had no regard for the king, or had committed a deed worthy of death. This is how God saw him – and God sees things the way they are.
- In general, his life was free from morel taint. He lived consistent with his faith, and sought no occasions to violate the will of either God or man.
- He had chosen to honor God, rather than yield to the flawed and unrighteous edicts of men.

- In heaven, Daniel was not noted for departing from the Lord or violating His will.

Note the Reasoning

It is important that we take note of Daniel's reasoning. It is the reasoning of faith, and thus can instruct us. The reason for his deliverance was his "innocency." Those who imagine that human conduct has no bearing on whether or not they receive Divine assistance do well to ponder this text.

David once said he would compass the altar, or come before the Lord, in a state of "innocency" (Psa 26:6). It is the business of every believer to put a deliberate distance between themselves and sin. There is, in God's estimation, such a thing as "the innocent and righteous" (Ex 23:7), and an "innocent person" (Deut 27:25). This is a moral condition in which men have "no evil thing to say of you" (Tit 2:8). It is being "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke" (Phil 2:15).

I fear there is altogether too much flawed thinking and speaking on this subject. This condition is betrayed by such aphorisms as "nobody is perfect," "we all sin," "we are only human," "we all sin a little every day," and the likes. No person living by faith will speak in such a slipshod manner. While no understanding and truthful person will say they "have no sin" (1 John 1:8), neither will they devote themselves to sin or give an excuse for personal transgression.

If Daniel, prior to Christ and the New Covenant, could be innocent before God, how much more can this be said of those who are in Christ Jesus. Such have "peace with God" (Rom 5:1), "no condemnation" (Rom 8:1), and access to continual cleansing (1 John 1:7,9).

INNOCENCY BEFORE THE KING

" . . . forasmuch as before him innocency was found . . . also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt."

Daniel's innocency extended to the king as well as to his God. His failure to obey the king's edict was not an act of rebellion, but one of honoring his God. He has "committed no crime" against the king, as Barrabas did in his insurrection against the government (Mark 15:7).

It is true that he had refused to obey the decree made by Darius. However, he did so because he had no other acceptable alternative. The truth of the matter is that God is not a vassal of some other deity. Nor, indeed, are there any equals to Himself (Isa 44:8). Therefore, it follows that there are both moral and spiritual obligations to "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Daniel was, in fact, yielding to Darius' superior. Should Darius see fit to receive this, it certainly would yield no hurt to him, and Daniel knew it. Daniel therefore acknowledges the truth before the king fearlessly and in faith.

A Final Word

Before leaving this section, we ought to once again note how kindly Daniel responded to the king. He did not choose to speak out against the king, drawing attention to his unjust law, contrived by Daniel's enemies. Flesh could certainly build a strong case for responding in such a manner to a king – particularly a heathen king.

By drawing attention to his own integrity and noble motives, both of which had been fully established, Daniel made a place for the Lord to work with Darius. It is better for the “ignorance of foolish men” to be “put to silence” with “well doing,” rather than eloquent arguments (1 Pet 2:15).

The Lord does come to the aid of those who think enough of Him to conduct their lives within the light of His countenance. That is something you do well to believe, for it is the truth, as confirmed in this very account. It is never vain to serve the Lord, and it is never right to cease to do so! Those who seek for an excuse to avoid serving the Lord betray their unbelief, and are immediately placed in jeopardy. Our servitude must be continuous.

THE KING IS GLAD, AND DANIEL IS TAKEN OUT OF THE DEN

“ 23 Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.”

Much will be learned from the response of Darius to Daniel's words. The extent to which God supports the godly will also be perceived, as the heart of a heathen king is seen to be in the hand of the Lord (Priv 21:1). The Lord alone can shape and control how men respond to His people. Faith is willing to depend upon that reality, refusing to move those who believe to take matters into their own hands.

THE KING WAS GLAD FOR HIM

“Then was the king exceeding glad for him . . .” Other versions read, “very pleased,” NASB and “then was the king overjoyed.” NIV

Like a spring of water, the king's joy overflowed. He was transcendently elated that his edict had been reversed by the God of Daniel. His own folly, which resulted from him being snared by his nobles, had been negated by the Living God. He saw it and was glad.

A Different Response

See how radically this king differed from Pharaoh. After witnessing the powerful working of the Lord, it is thrice said of him, "he hardened his heart" (Ex 8:15,32; 9:34).

After Israel had been singularly blessed by God, He said of them: "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deu 32:15).

Do Not Take Them for Granted

Favorable responses to Divine manifestations are not to be taken for granted. The people of God should never allow an institutional mind-set to cause them to despise honorable responses to the Word of God among a people they do not think are thoroughly informed. Good responses may not always be thorough ones. Sometimes they are like beginnings that should not be despised.

TAKE HIM OUT!

" . . . and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den . . . " Another version reads "gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den." NIV

The den, then, was a sort of pit that apparently was beneath the ground. With a great stone having been laid upon the mouth of the den, there can be little doubt that great darkness was there, where neither hand nor lions could be seen with any clarity.

Like Jeremiah

The experience of Daniel is something like that of Jeremiah. He also was raised up out of a dungeon into which he had been thrown. In his case Ebedmelech took some "old rags and worn out clothes," telling Jeremiah "Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms to pad the ropes" NIV (Jer 38:11-12). I do not know if similar consideration was given to Daniel, but do not doubt such was the case. After all, God was taking care of him, not Darius!

One small note. Observe that the law against Daniel was passed in consultation with Darius' nobles. But this is not the case Daniel's deliverance . There is no consultation with the nobles on this matter. Again, it is because God is in it.

Like All Believers

In a sense, Daniel's deliverance was much like that of all believers – a sort of type or shadow of Divine deliverance. David put it in most comforting words. “ He brought me up also out of an horrible pit , out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD” (Psa 40:2-3).

Our own situation was much like that of Daniel, whether in initial salvation or succeeding deliverances. We had to be “raised” from our situation, miraculously delivered from it – else we would have remained there until we died.

NO MANNER OF HURT

“ . . . and no manner of hurt was found upon him . . . ” Other versions read, “no injury whatever was found on him,” NKJV “no wound was found on him,” NIV “no kind of harm was found on him,” NRSV and “he was seen to be untouched .” BBE

Daniel had not been bruised by the plummet into the den. Nor, indeed, was there any evidence of so much as one lion touching him. It goes without saying, that this was not “luck,” “happenstance,” or the result of Daniel's dexterity – i.e., being able to land on his feet and avoid the hungry lions through some expert movement. This was not a young man, but old man. The fall could not hurt him, nor could the lions' paws or teeth. In fact, there was absolutely no evidence that he had been in a pit or among ravenous lions. He had no marks or scars, no torn parts in his clothing, or bleached out facial expressions.

As with the three Hebrew children, an examination was made of Daniel. The king did not take his deliverance for granted, for it has been ascribed to God, who sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths. It was necessary for the evidence to support such a claim – and it most assuredly did!

A Principle to be Seen

God is honored when claims of His deliverance are supported by evidence of the same. He is dishonored when there is some boast of rescue that appears to contradict that claim. Those who affirm they are “saved,” or have access to and fellowship with God, ought not to have the “spot” of the world upon them (James 1:27). Their “garment,” so to speak, should not be “spotted by the flesh” (Jude 1:23).

The failure of this condition to accompany claims of Divine deliverance is like Daniel saying the mouths of the lions had been shut, while having the teeth marks of lions upon his body. It would be like

Daniel saying the angel of the Lord had shut the lions' mouths, while standing in garments that had been obviously shredded by those very lions.

BECAUSE HE BELIEVED

“ . . . because he believed in his God.” Other versions read, “because he had trusted in his God,” NASB and “because he had faith in his God.” BBE

The idea is that WHILE he was in the den, he trusted in, or depended upon, his God. His was not an empty profession, but the genuine profession of faith (Heb 10:23).

Living Faith?

Because of a word written by James, some have assumed there are two kinds of faith – living faith and dead faith. James' words are, “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? . . . For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:20,26). In this sense, the view is taken that works are a mere technicality. Faith that lacks works is, in such a case, merely a deficient faith. Those who have works, therefore, have excelled in faith, moving beyond mediocrity.

But this is not what James is saying. Faith without works is no faith at all. Such a person is not relying upon the Lord or believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Rather, that individual has risen no higher than the demons, who also have no works, even though they are surely convinced of the existence of God (James 2:19).

Just as a body without a spirit has no utility whatsoever, and is no person at all, so faith without works is no faith at all. When James speaks of the “body without the spirit,” he is not speaking of a body in the grave, or the body after the spirit has left it. Rather, he is speaking of a living person – one that is moving about and active in this world. In this case, for there to be a body walking about in which no human spirit resided is an absurdity of the greatest magnitude. There simply is no such thing, nor can there be. Neither is there such a thing as having faith without also possessing its accompanying works.

In Daniel's case, his faith was accompanied by a refusal to stop praying. It was also attended by submitting to be thrown into the lions' den. Additionally, it was attached to a trust that continued through the dark night among ravenous and heartless beasts. That is the way faith works – all the time. Blessed are the people who have “obtained” it.

THE KING DEALS WITH THE ACCUSERS

“ 24 And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.”

There is an unalterable law in the Kingdom of God. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal 6:7). It is not possible avoid this law, or principle. The only issue is WHEN the reaping will occur. Fortunately for the believing ones, God graciously grants “space to repent” (Rev 2:21), in order that men might sow differently, and thus reap a good harvest. Since the Median nobles are so wicked, no such space is given to them. They will now reap what they have sown – but it will not be by themselves. Their transgression will have an impact upon their families also.

THE EVILDOERS ARE PUNISHED

“And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives . . . ”

Darius was not indifferent to those who had falsely charged Daniel, even shaping a law so as to misrepresent him to Darius. Like the devil himself, they had “accused” the man of God, cooking up a law that would cause a distorted view of his person. The king gave them no thought when he called for Daniel. They were not in his mind when he commanded that Daniel be thrown into the lions’ den. Neither, indeed, was he thinking about them during his previous restless night. However, now he will deal with them. He will do so because God is in the matter. The Lord is vindicating his servant, just as he did in the case of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Their children and Their Wives

Not only are the nobles consigned to the den of lions, but their families as well: “their children and their wives.” Admittedly this causes the tender person to cringe. It is most gruesome and heartless – at least from one point of view.

On the surface, this appears to violate a law God gave to Israel. “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers : every man shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deu 24:16). Thus, it is reasoned, this is purely an act of Darius, and a ruthless one at that.

While we do have occasion to rejoice this is not the consistent Divine manner, yet God has revealed such punishments do come from Him.

- **ACHAN.** The case of Achan provides another example of an entire family suffering for the consequences of the father. “And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones” (Josh 7:24-25).
- **HAMAN.** The wicked man who sought to expunge the Jews in Esther’s day also caused the death of his sons. His malicious deed extended beyond his person. “Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them . . . The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand” (Esth 9:5,10).
- **ISRAEL AND KING SIHON.** When Israel sought to go through the territory ruled by king Sihon, the Lord hardened his heart so he would not let them pass through the land. He then delivered him into the hand of Israel. “Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz. And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people. And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain” (Deu 2:32-34).

Why??

Why are such accounts recorded in Scripture? It is certainly not because God takes delight in such things, for He does not. As it is written in Ezekiel, “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked.” The Lord prefers and delights to show mercy (Mic 7:18). However, there are other things to consider, and the passage in Ezekiel points us to one of those additional considerations: “but [I prefer] that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” (Ezek 33:11).

OTHER EXAMPLES. There are other examples of wholesale punishment. The flood (Gen 7:21), the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and the Jebusites (Deu 7:1), and the Amalekites (1 Sam 15:3). Make no mistake about this, there were children and wives in those incidents.

Sin has no anesthetized men’s hearts and minds they imagine they can sin with impunity. Add to that the fact that a considerable amount of supposed Christian theology understates the seriousness of sin, and the situation becomes greatly compounded. How can men be awakened to the gravity of sin, and the sureness of its penalty? How can they be made to see the seriousness of sin?

The answer is found in the recording of spiritually jolting accounts, such as the one before us. The fact that they are not the consistent way in which God has dealt with sin confirms He does not

simply desire to destroy people – else He would.

Rather than speculating about the nature of this judgment, our hearts are to be turned toward the gravity of rejecting the truth of God or opposing His people. Such things are not to be taken lightly. Eventually God will bring such actions into judgment. Unless there has been appropriate repentance from such things, the consequences will be eternal. In the meantime, let us avail ourselves of “space to repent,” and determine not to “fall into the hands of the Living God” (Heb 10:31).

BEFORE THEY CAME TO THE BOTTOM

“ . . . and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.” Other versions read, “the lions overpowered them , and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den,” NKJV “they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones ,” NASB and “The lions leaped on them and tore them apart before they even hit the floor of the den.” NLT

The lions had been deprived from having Daniel as a meal. Their mouths had been shut by the Lord’s angel. However, that angel is no longer there, but has departed from the lions’ den like the angel departed from the fiery furnace when the three children of Judah walked out of it.

Notice the radical difference in the behavior of the lions. While Daniel was in the den, they rested quietly all night with their mouths shut. Now their horrible nature is awakened, and they utterly crush the bones of multiple people before they hit the floor of the den. We do not know the number of people cast into the den, but it could well have been a considerable number.

It is as though the lions leaped up to catch the victims in their mouths, and had well consumed them before their carcasses reached the floor of the den. In a sense, this was a mercy, so that a severe penalty was paid quickly.

In view of this incident, we do well to ponder several questions.

- How serious is it to oppose a person who puts their trust in God?
- How weighty is it to become creative in opposing those who live by faith and refuse to honor the flesh?
- How crucial is it to seek ones own way at the expense of those who believe in God?

- How pivotal is it when people attempt to create circumstances that cause the people of God to appear in an unfavorable light?
- What good thing can come from hating, despising, or looking down upon the soul who trusts in God?

Wise, indeed, is the individual who takes such matters seriously.

ANOTHER WORLD-WIDE PROCLAMATION

“ 25 Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. 26 I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. 27 He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.”

Now we get to the heart of this entire incident. The Lord is making a name for Himself throughout the world. So far as the book of Daniel is concerned, this is the **THIRD** global proclamation of the greatness of God. Nebuchadnezzar published the first when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were delivered from the fiery furnace (3:29). He also delivered the second upon his recovery from a seven-year lesson on theology, when he had the heart of a beast and ate grass (4:1-3, 34-35).

As Paul said, God “left not Himself without witness” – **GLOBAL** witness (Acts 14:17). While nature is one of those witnesses, there have been multiple attestants to the Divine nature – words that have been addressed to rational men by reasoning people.

- **THE FLOOD.** Every nation in the world came from the descendants of Noah, from which the knowledge of Divine judgment and intolerance with iniquity was declared (Gen 9:18-19).
- **THE TOWER OF BABEL.** This magnificent project was aborted by a God who was grieved by the whole work. The people were then scattered abroad “upon the face of all the earth.” They knew of Divine judgment, and doubtless spoke of it. The population of the whole earth was affected by this judgment (Gen 11:8).
- **DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT.** Word of this mighty deliverance spread throughout the world (Josh 2:10; 4:24; Num 22:5; 2 Sam 7:22-23).

- **CONQUERING CANAAN.** Word of the triumph of Israel over the seven nations of Canaan was universally known (1 Chron 17:20).
- **ISRAEL THRUST FROM THE LAND OF CANAAN.** Because of their sin, the Lord thrust Israel from the land of promise, particularly in the Babylonian captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem. This was done that all nations might know Him (Deut 29:23-24).
- **THE DECREE OF CYRUS.** God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus the Persian to build the Temple of God, moving this world ruler to speak about it (Ezra 1:2; 6:3-6).
- **NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S TWO PROCLAMATIONS.** (Dan 3:29; 4:1-35).
- **DARIUS' PROCLAMATION** (6:25-27).

Without Excuse

Add to this the consistent testimonies of nature (Rom 1:20; Psa 19:1-3) and the human conscience (Rom 2:15) , and you can see why it is inexcusable to fail to seek the Lord! Still more, consider that on the day of Pentecost there were “devout men out of every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5), who heard and obeyed the Gospel, ultimately returning to their own lands.

One other factor accents this truth. God has deliberately placed men in geographical places, and determined the exact time in which all men exist. His reason for doing this is that they might seek after Him. As it is written, “From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27).

ALL PEOPLE, NATIONS, AND LANGUAGES

“Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you . . .”

It is not the manner of the Holy Spirit to exaggerate. We do well to take His words precisely as they are stated, not resorting to language like “then known earth,” and the likes. This is a large declaration, and should be so regarded. Everyone is included – “all people.” All political bodies are included – all “nations.” Every cultural body is embraced – all “languages.”

Nebuchadnezzar had addressed his decrees to “every people, nation, and language” (Dan 3:29), and “all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth” (Dan 4:1). Pharaoh was raised up that God’s name might be declared “throughout all the earth” (Ex 9:16). Israel was thrust out of Canaan that “all nations” might say, “Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the

heat of this great anger?” (Deu 29:24). What will king Darius write to “all people, nations, and languages?”

PEACE BE MULTIPLIED

“Peace be multiplied unto you!” These are the same words Nebuchadnezzar used to introduce his decree (Dan 4:1). This was not, therefore, a declaration of war, but a summons to sobriety and recognition of the God of Daniel. The thoughts of the king were to be embraced without being intimidated by his authority. He was not writing as a mere ruler, but as one who had seen something of the greatness of the God of Daniel. More precisely, he was being moved by the Lord to accent things the world is intended to know.

TREMBLE AND FEAR BEFORE GOD

“ . . . I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before . . . God . . . ” Other versions read “must tremble and fear,” NKJV “must fear and reverence,” NIV “should tremble and fear,” NRSV “dread and fear,” DOUAY

It is as though Darius was warning the people not to oppose this God or those who served Him. He does not summon men to love Daniel’s God, but to be afraid of Him – afraid to contradict Him, set about to harm His people, or speak in a derisive manner about Him.

An Application

Here is an aspect of our relationship to God that could well be clarified to the hearts of believers. Solemnly the Lord Jesus said, “fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mat 10:28). And again, “But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him” (Luke 12:5). Peter admonished us, “Fear God!” (1 Pet 2:17).

On Patmos, John heard a voice from heaven saying, “Fear God, and give Him glory” (Rev 14:7).

Lest anyone imagine they are close enough to the Lord to ignore this admonition, the church at Philippi, noted for its consistent and growing faith, were told, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ” (Phil 2:12). The modern church would do well to hear the decree of Darius the Mede, even though it sharply contrasts with current thrusts.

THE GOD OF DANIEL

“ . . . the God of Daniel . . . ” That is, the God Daniel served continually, and whose Law he refused to transgress. This is the God that sent His angel and delivered Daniel. The language is not philosophical, but has resulted from what Darius has himself witnessed – the working of the Lord.

HE IS THE LIVING GOD

“ . . . for He is the living God . . . ” This description of God is given two times in Daniel, and both times they are spoken by Darius (vs 20,26).

Elsewhere in Scripture this expression is found twenty-eight times.

- It is associated with God speaking (Deut 5:26)
- Driving out the enemy (Josh 3:10).
- Standing for the people who served Him (1 Sam 17:26,26)
- Meeting the desires of a thirsty and longing soul (Psa 42:2; 84:2).
- Implementing His indignation against His opponents (Jer 10:10).
- Having sons among men (Hos 1:10).
- Being the Father of Christ (Matt 16:16; John 6:69).
- The creation of the heaven, earth, sea, and everything in them (Acts 14:15).
- Having a Spirit that accomplishes things in men (2 Cor 3:3).
- Walking and dwelling in His people (2 Cor 6:16).
- Having a church which is the “pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15).
- Being the Savior of all men, especially those who believe (1 Tim 4:10).
- He gives us richly all things to enjoy (1 Tim 6:17).

The “living God” is associated with life, activity, initiative, and purpose. Let men cease to speak impersonally about “the living God,” couching their thoughts in philosophical speech and human tradition.

HE IS STEADFAST FOREVER

“ . . . and steadfast for ever . . .” Other versions read, “enduring forever,” NASB “unchanging forever,” BBE “eternal God forever” DOUAY and “abiding to the ages.” YLT

“Steadfast forever” equates to “eternal God” (Deut 33:27), or “the everlasting God” (Gen 21:33). It speaks of a God that “changes not” (Mal 3:6), has no need to repent (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29), and is “the same” (Psa 102:26). It is said of the God who is “steadfast forever,” “great is Thy faithfulness” (Lam 3:23). With Him there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). His Word is sure, and His promises cannot fail. It means His counsel stands (Isa 46:10), and His Word always accomplishes what He sends it to do (Isa 55:11).

Faith requires a “steadfast” God! No person, regardless of intellectual acumen or disciple, can knowingly and deliberate trust a vacillating and inconsistent god. Before Satan himself can constrain an individual to serve false god, he must first convince them he can be trusted – even if that god is the devil himself.

HIS KINGDOM SHALL NOT BE DESTROYED

“ . . . and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed . . .” This truth was also revealed to Nebuchadnezzar – “shall never be destroyed” (2:44). In the seventh chapter of Daniel, this aspect of God’s Kingdom is again revealed to Daniel – “His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (7:14). It is another way of saying God’s Kingdom is “an everlasting Kingdom” (Psa 145:13; Dan 4:3; 2 Pet 1:11). Isaiah spoke of this Kingdom, stating the Messiah would assume its reins: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder . . . Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end ” (Isa 9:6-7).

It is not possible for the Kingdom of God to be upstaged, rendered inadequate, or passed on to someone else. Those who “enter” this Kingdom now, through the new birth and the redemption that is in Christ, will transfer their membership into the world to come. It truly is an “everlasting Kingdom” (Dan 7:27).

HIS DOMINION SHALL BE UNTO THE END

“ . . . and His dominion shall be even unto the end.” Other versions read, “His dominion shall endure to the end,” NKJV “His dominion will be forever,” NASB “His dominion will never end,” NIV “His dominion has no end.” NRSV

The words used in the KJV and NKJV (“unto the end,” and “to the end”), do not suggest “the

end” is the terminal point of Divine dominion. The Holy Spirit has assigned to the words “the end” a significant meaning. While there is not perfect consistency in this matter, there is a level of truth at which this meaning IS perfectly consistent.

- Jesus spoke of enduring to “the end” (Matt 10:22).
- The final “harvest” of souls is said to be at “the end of the world” (Matt 13:39).
- Jesus confirms believers “unto the end” (1 Cor 1:8).
- The time when all authority and power is obviously under the feet of Jesus is identified as “the end” (1 Cor 15:24).
- Those in Christ are to “hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” (Heb 3:6).
- We are admonished to “hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Heb 3:14).
- The “full assurance of hope” is to be maintained “unto the end” (Heb 6:11).

In this sense, therefore “the end” refers to the termination of time and this world as we know it. Apart from unique phrases like “the end of the Law” (Rom 10:4), “the end of the commandment” (1 Tim 1:5), “the end of your faith” (1 Pet 1:9), “the end” refers to the conclusion of time.

However, this is not the intention of our text, and it ought not to be so considered. It is true that the “dominion.” or rule, of the Lord will continue to that time. But it will also extend out into eternity. Thus it is said of the Lord Jesus, “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all ” (1 Cor 15:24-28). That is the sense in which God’s dominion “will never end.” NIV

This is a cardinal aspect of the truth that is proclaimed throughout Scripture. It is a particular point the Lord impressed upon both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. It should be well known among those professing the name of Christ. There is no need for the comprehension of the church to be dwarfed by that of Darius the Mede !

HE DELIVERS AND RESCUES

“ . . . He delivereth and rescueth.” Other versions read “rescues and saved,” NIV “gives salvation and makes men free from danger,” BBE “saves and sets free.” NJB Although it may appear there is a small redundancy in these words (deliver and rescue), there is a slight, yet powerful, difference in them. “ Deliver” puts the accent on the effect of being saved – being left free. “Rescue” emphasizes the

deliverance itself , like being removed from the danger without experiencing any of its intended effects – i.e., leaving the furnace of fire or den of lions.

Daniel was “delivered” from the den in the sense of never again having to experience it. He was “rescued” from it in sense of being removed from it.

Now Darius had, to some measurable degree, seen that God can raise people out of things that would otherwise mean their termination. He has also seen that God can keep them from going back into that situation .

As with David, Daniel was “delivered” from his “enemies” – from their intentions, and the means through which they thought to eliminate him (Psa 18:48). Like David, he was “rescued” from the ravages of his enemies – the snares and traps they had laid for him (Psa 35:17).

In making this grand proclamation to all of the world, Darius speaks of a delivering and rescuing God. All the world hears about it, and Daniel himself is the evidence of the message.

Application

Our concept of salvation must include both deliverance and rescue – getting us out of the devils domain and keeping us out. In my judgment, there is a lop-sided teaching in our day that has inordinately emphasized getting out of the “den,” so to speak, without due recognition that we can be kept out of it.

One Further Thought

The intention of Divine deliverance and rescue is not the mere extrication of people from trouble. Rather, we are delivered and rescued in order that we might serve the Lord. Thus it is written, “That He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life ” (Luke 1:74-75).

Where God is not served without fear, and in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life, there has been no purpose served by salvation – by either deliverance or rescue. For men to fail in this service and still reign with Jesus in glory would mean God would be mocked. That simply will not happen, and we do well to ponder that reality.

SIGNS AND WONDERS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

“ . . . and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth . . .” Other versions read, “performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth,” NASB “does signs and wonders in heaven and earth,” BBE “doing signs and wonders in heaven, and in earth,” DOUAY and “doer of signs and wonders in the heavens and in earth.” YLT

In Heaven

There are things God does in heaven that no one else can do! Whether we are speaking of the starry heavens, or where the Father resides, the meaning is the same. Lofty angels like Michael and Gabriel can do great things – things transcendent to nature. However, their power and ability has a terminal point. There are signs and wonders at which those mighty angels marvel – and they are all done by God! God has effected a salvation, and inspired a Gospel that has intrigued the holy angels themselves (1 Pet 1:12). He does signs in heaven! Jesus said he beheld Satan as lightning “fall from heaven” (Lk 10:18). God performs signs in heaven. We are even told the blood of Christ was so effective, heavenly things were purified by it (Heb (9:23). God does signs in heaven!

If you want to view “heaven” as the higher portion of creation, God does signs there also. He caused a deluge to fall from heaven, the firmament emptying its copious waters upon the earth, for forty days and forty nights (Gen 7:11-12). God works signs and wonder in heaven! God is said to cause hail stones to fall from heaven that weighed one hundred pounds each (Rev 16:21). Once God “hurled” large hailstones from heaven, killing the armies of the Amorite kings (Josh 10:11). God does signs in heaven! Another time he caused the sun to stand still in order that Israel might win a battle (Josh 10:12). God performs signs and wonders in heaven. On another occasion, He caused the sun to go backward ten degrees (Isa 38:8). He does signs and wonders in heaven!

In Earth

God not only does according to His will in heaven, but among “the inhabitants of the earth” as well (Dan 4:35). Time would fail to speak of the mighty signs and wonders our God was wrought upon the earth. The cursing of Cain (Gen 4:7), the flood (Gen 7), the scattering of Babel (Gen 11), a smoking lamp and a burning furnace that passed through Abraham’s divided sacrifice with miraculous fire (Gen 5:17). Then there was the conception of Isaac (Gen 21:2), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19), and Lot’s wife turning to a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26). He closed all of the wombs of Abimelech’s house (Gen 20:17-18), and opened Hagar’s eyes to see a well (Gen 21:19). He cause a bush to burn, yet not be consumed (Ex 3:2), changed Moses’ rod into a serpent, then turned it back to a rod when he seized it by the tail (Ex 4:3-4). The Lord does signs and wonders in the earth.

Who can forget the stilling of the tempest (Matt 8:23-27), the feeding of the five thousand (Matt 14:15-21), and the countless healings performed by our Lord (Matt 12:15; Lk 6:19)! He does signs and wonders in the earth! And what of Christ’s resurrection from the dead (Acts 10:40), His ascension before the disciples (Acts 1:10-11), and the sending of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). He works signs and wonders in the earth! Then there were the miracles of the twelve disciples (Mark 6:7), the seventy disciples (Lk 10:17-20), and other disciples (Mark 9:39). He performs signs and wonders in the earth!

This Is God's Nature

However, the point here is not merely to enumerate the signs and wonders God has wrought in both heaven and earth. That is not the point of Darius' proclamation either. This is a declaration of the nature and character of God! It is God Himself that is being proclaimed, not merely what He does. His Person, without exception, accounts for what he does. It is true, the Lord is known by what He does. The point here, however, is that He Himself DOES signs and wonders in heaven and earth. That is His nature!

Ponder the other things that Darius affirms of the Living God. He is "living" and "steadfast." His kingdom will "never be destroyed," and His dominion is "will be forever." He "delivers and rescues" as well. That is what God does. That is His nature. He does all of these things according to His will – but He does them, and that is the point. For God NOT to do them would require that He deny Himself.

What would move anyone to take the last two things said of God – "He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth" – and affirm God no longer does this! What principle of interpretation or form of sound reasoning would lead anyone to such a conclusion?

It is time for the church to at least come up to the level of Darius. So far as we know, he had only seen one display of these qualities – at least only one he had recognized. No doubt he had also heard what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, as well as the writing on Belshazzar's palace wall and its interpretation. Yet he associated what he saw with who God is, not something He did periodically, or on a temporary basis.

Application

When it comes to God Almighty, even Darius the Mede knew He was not confined to nature, but rather was inclined to work in a manner that is transcendent to it. The frequency of those workings, as well as their magnitude, is not the point. Rather, it is that God's nature moves Him to work signs and wonders above and beneath, in heaven and on earth.

These things are intended to spawn hope in the faithful, confirming to their hearts that they will never pass through a circumstance God does not control. Neither, indeed, will they ever be in a situation from which God cannot extricate them.

With great care, believers must avoid the attempt to formulate lifeless dogmas and powerless systems that attempt to explain what God can and cannot do – or once did and no longer does. These packaged theological systems might serve human purposes well, but they do nothing for those who have put their faith in God.

God's nature has not changed. Not even the most rabid contender for the cessation of miracles is willing to affirm that – and Darius is speaking of the Divine nature.

It is quite possible that men may live in a period of time when Divine workings are not evident. Gideon lived in such a time. He asked the message-bearing angel, “where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about” (Judg 6:13). Gideon was living in dry times.

For that matter, when the Lord Jesus was making His entrance into the world, the miracles of God had not been seen in a long time. The people were sitting “in darkness” (Lk 1:79), “looking for redemption in Jerusalem” (Lk 2:38). When the mighty prophet John the Baptist came on the scene, he “did no miracle” (John 10:41). It was a period of time in which the “mighty works of God” had not been seen for a long time. I suppose it might have been argued that God no longer worked in supernatural ways. After all, the circumstances certainly seemed to justify such a conclusion – at least from a human point of view. Thank God some of our twentieth century theologians were not there to further muddy the water for the people!

Take It to Heart

Whatever you may think about signs, wonders, miracles, and the likes, you need to take to heart what Darius published throughout the world. His message is intended for the United States of America, as well as Persia, India, and Assyria.

When you consider the Lord, think of Him as alive, active, and doing His will – “the living God.” Think of Him as being “enduring for ever,” faithful, true, and unwavering in His commitments – “steadfast for ever.” Consider His Kingdom as a reign that will never be destroyed, rendered obsolete, or overshadowed by a greater one – “His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Ponder His dominion, or rule, as extending into eternity, with no interruption whatsoever – “His dominion will be for ever.” When you think of the Lord, see Him as the One who delivers, and is inclined to do so – “He delivers!” See Him as the One who rescues, removing people from danger, bondage, and the threats of the ungodly – “He rescues!” Think of Him as the One who performs works that are transcendent in heaven, and supernatural upon the earth – who causes both angels and men to marvel – “He works signs and wonders in heaven and on the earth.”

You have not sinned in thinking of God in this manner, for this is how He has revealed Himself. In our text, He does so through Darius. Earlier in Daniel He did it through Nebuchadnezzar. He also did the same through Daniel the prophet. You have violated no principle of interpretation by embracing such things, Nor, indeed, have you become foolish for doing so.

If you have not already been rendered utterly helpless by circumstance, it will probably not be long until you are. When you are in the bottom of the pit (Psa 40:2), or experiencing the waves of trouble (2 Sam 22:5; Psa 42:7), tell me if you do not derive comfort from the proclamation of that Median king

Darius. Such comfort testifies to the truth of what he declared – truth God moved him to speak to the whole world.

DELIVERED FROM THE POWER OF THE LIONS

“ . . . who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” There have been a few men who have survived an encounter with lions – very few. David did (1 Sam a7:34-36), as well as Samson (Judges 14:5-6). Benaiah tracked a lion through the snow to a pit, into which he entered, killing the lion (2 Sam 23:20).

A certain prophet who lied about his mission did not do so well. When he met a lion, the lion killed him (1 Kgs 13:24). Another man who refused to hearken to a son of the prophets, was found by a lion, which slew him (1 Kgs 20:36). Once the Lord sent lions among those who failed to fear Him, and the lions killed some of them (2 Kgs 17:25-26). Facing a single lion generally meant death, unless there was a miraculous deliverance from the Lord.

But in the case of Daniel, Darius proclaims, multiple lions were faced who were unusually powerful – at the peak of their strength. The man of God did not face them on a road, or in the wilderness, but in a den prepared for them. The area was confining, the lions were ferocious, and they had all night to do their work. Yet “God delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” The deed was done in Babylon, but proclaimed to the world. The proclamation did not come from a bystander, but from the world ruler, and personal eye witness of the work.

I ask you, is it not marvelous that the Lord moved Darius to cause this decree to be published throughout the whole world? Then, as though that was not enough, He inspired Daniel to recall all of the details, writing them in a book for His people.

DANIEL PROSPERS ONCE AGAIN

“ 28 So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” Other versions read, “So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian,” NASB “So this Daniel did well in the kingdom of Darius and in the kingdom of Cyrus the Persian,” BBE “This Daniel flourished in the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian,” NJB

This is a brief summation of Daniel’s success during the dominance of the Medio-Persian empire. This was the divided kingdom represented by the arms of silver in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (2:32). It was the kingdom represented by a ram with two horns (8:20). God had “divided” the Babylonian, or Chaldean, kingdom, and “given it to the Medes and the Persians” (5:28).

Many of the nobles did not survive the transfer of power, but Daniel did. He not only survived, he “prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus.” This implies that he was restored to his place of prominence – perhaps even elevated higher.

DANIEL PROSPERS

Even though I have addressed this subject in an earlier lesson, it is appropriate to say a few words about it here as well. Among the unlearned “prosper” is often taken to mean become wealthy, or in some sense well-to-do. Thus, when we read of prospering and being in good health (3 John 1:2), some think of health and wealth,. But that is not the Scriptural use of the word “prosper.” In our parlance, the common word for “prosper” is succeed, or successful. Thus a persons “way,” or journey, is said to prosper, enabling him to fulfill his mission (Gen 24:40,42). As in the case of Joseph, whatever he did prospered, or was successful. He did not fail to accomplish what he set out to do, or come short in any assignment given to him (Gen 39:3,23). It is said of the righteous man, “whatever he does shall prosper” (Psa 1:3). When it comes to prospering in the world and increasing in riches, the Psalmist says of such, “these are the ungodly” (Psa 73:12). In so speaking, he speaks of life’s normalities. This is not the normal status of the people of God – but true prosperity can be.

During the reigns of Darius and Cyrus, whatever Daniel put his hand to prospered, whether in the area of prophecy or executing governmental affairs. The book of Daniel will especially highlight his activity in the kingdom of God. We will learn very little concerning his activities in the government of the Medes and the Persians. The thrust of the emphasis from this point on will be the prophetic utterances of Daniel.

- The seventh chapter will detail a vision Daniel had during the first year of the reign of Belshazzar (7:1).
- The eight chapter will unfold a vision that appeared to him during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign (8:1).
- In the ninth chapter Daniel will declare what he came to understand from Jeremiah’s books of the Babylonian captivity during the first year of the reign of Darius. He will record a lengthy prayer and the answer brought to him by Gabriel (9:1-2, 21). In this chapter he also gives a remarkable and pointed prophecy of the Messiah and His appointed death (9:25-26).
- The tenth chapter will delineate something revealed to Daniel during the third year of the reign of Cyrus (10:1). This is the chapter that speaks of his twenty-one day prayer – a prayer that was heard the first day, yet answered twenty one days later, and the restraining influence of a spiritual force that ruled over Persia.
- In the eleventh chapter Daniel recounts how he stood to encourage and protect Darius. He does so by opening the future of Persia as it has been revealed to him by God (11:1-2). In this chapter he speaks of “the time of the end,” and the jostling of political powers under the mighty hand of God

(11:40-45).

- The twelfth chapter unfolds a time when the mighty angel Michael will stand up for the Jews, the children of God's people (12:1). He speaks of unparalleled trouble, the resurrection of the dead, and glorification of the saints of God (12:1-3).

This is the Divine commentary on the prospering of Daniel during the reigns of Darius and Cyrus. There is not so much as a syllable about him accumulating wealth, houses, lands, or the likes. There is no more talk about political promotions or the execution of governmental responsibilities. We will never again hear of the nobles, wise men, or sorcerers that were Daniel's contemporaries – never again.

Up until this time, Daniel only opened what other people had received. He related and interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image (chapter 2). He interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's image of the flourishing tree that was cut down (chapter 4). He interpreted the handwriting on the wall that was addressed to Belshazzar (chapter 5).

From this point on Daniel will receive special revelations. He will not be required to interpret what someone else experienced! Six chapters have been devoted to his involvement with others through Divine power. The closing six chapters will focus on him and God alone. The latter prosperity of Daniel will be greater than his former. He will rise higher in the Spirit than he did in the flesh.

A SPECIAL OBSERVATION

Although Daniel was elevated under both Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar (2:48; 5:29), it is never said that he "prospered" during their regimes. During Nebuchadnezzar's reign Daniel appeared to have been nearly forgotten (Dan 2:26; 4:9). The same occurred during the reign of Belshazzar (5:10-16). But now, in the divided kingdom, Daniel "prosperes," apparently doing so without interruption.

The Last Is Better

Many of God's people should take great consolation in this record. In the Divine economy the latter is always more glorious than the former. The "Second Man" is more glorious and effective than the "first man" (1 Cor 15:47). The "second" covenant is better than the "first" (Heb 8:7). The "new man" is superior to the "old man" (Col 3:9-10). The new body will be vastly superior to our present one (1 Cor 15:42-44). The "first man Adam" is inferior to the "last Adam," Jesus (1 Cor 15:45). The "new creation" far exceeds the natural creation, which came first (2 Cor 5:17). The "new heavens and earth" will be infinitely better than the "first heaven and the first earth" (Rev 21:1).

All of this is marvelously confirmed in the latter part of Daniel's life. Here is a prophet of singular note, who closed out his life relatively alone.

CONCLUSION

The sixth chapter of continues to expound the wonderful works of God. As it is written, “He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered” (Psa 111:4). In keeping with that revelation, Darius was raised up to proclaim what God did in the province of Babylon. The work was not intended to be a private and undeclared one. That is not God’s manner. The Lord did not depend upon a random sharing of these events from person to person.

Whatever may be said of person-to-person witnessing, it is not always the most powerful method of getting the word out.

- In Daniel, the Lord used the decrees of global rulers (Nebuchadnezzar and Darius) to make his workings known.
- When it came to the dissemination of the Law of God, it was “given by Moses” (John 1:17).
- Among the Israelites, He used the mighty Prophets, who put matters in perspective and declared the determined purpose of God (Jer 7:25; Heb 1:1).
- The introduction the Savior did not come through individuals passing among each other, declaring that He was coming. Instead, God sent a “the voice of ONE, crying in the wilderness,” John the Baptist (Isa 40:1-3; John 1:23).
- When the Lord’s hand was extended to the Gentiles, He sent a man to “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18).

I certainly am not suggesting there is no place for individual witnessing. God forbid that such a thought should ever be entertained. What I am affirming is that God has NEVER left the spreading of the message in the hands of the multitudes. He has consistently used individuals to push the knowledge of Himself into the world’s extremities.

This is how we account for the prominence of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It accounts for the time of the Judges, as well as the time of the kings. David, the “sweet Psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam 23:1) was used of God to put into precise words the feelings of a soul that is sensitive to God. Job was elevated to testify to the power of even a rudimentary faith, to show how much a man can endure, and yet not sin with his mouth or against God. Solomon was raised up to testify of the utter futility of world wisdom –

even when it comes from God Himself. John the Baptist confirms how excellent and spiritually influential a man can be without any known earthly advantage. Paul was raised up to show how thoroughly a person can be committed to the Lord, and how much one person can do.

At some point, the people of God must see the kingdom of God as bigger than their own group. Nebuchadnezzar had to extend his thoughts beyond the empire of Babylon. Belshazzar had to be forced to think beyond enjoying a time of fleshly indulgence. Darius was brought to see his own foolishness and impotence, and the wisdom and omnipotence of the Living God. In all three cases, they were brought to see how great God is. The first and the last kings were used to proclaim this to the whole world.

That is how God works. What is declared in secret is to be proclaimed from the housetops. As our Lord Himself said, “What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops” (Mat 10:27). In His great Kingdom, God is looking for those who are willing to abandon everything for Him – men and women who are willing to speak by faith before having to learn the hard way like Nebuchadnezzar and Darius. Such sensitive individuals bring glory to God.

The Prophecy of Daniel

DANIEL'S FIRST VISION OF FOUR BEASTS FROM THE SEA

Lesson #19

INTRODUCTION

With this chapter we enter into the most controversial part of the book of Daniel. All manner of strange doctrines and erroneous emphases have been hawked among believers concerning the last six chapters of this book. In order to prepare our minds for what is revealed in this text, it is necessary to recall what has been affirmed to this point. The first six chapters of Daniel are the context in which the second six chapters can be profitably understood. I say “profitably understood” because a considerable amount of teaching relating to Daniel has little beneficial and gratifying value. It either tends to minimize the teaching by accenting history, or render it powerless by disassociating it from living by faith, and assigning it only to the future.

The Lord has revealed a lot of Himself in the first six chapters, much of which was proclaimed to the entire world by Nebuchadnezzar and Darius. While I have already itemized some of these things, I must again draw attention to them. It is in the light of these things that the text before us will have particular relevance and value to us. These all involve direct statements concerning the Lord.

- The Lord gave Jehoiachim king of Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand (1:2a).
- The Lord gave "part of the vessels of the house of God" to Nebuchadnezzar (1:2b).
- God brought Daniel into favor with the prince of the eunuchs (1:9).
- God gave "knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" to the four children of Judah (1:17a).
- God gave Daniel understanding in all visions and dreams (1:17b).
- God revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning to Daniel (2:17-19).
- Wisdom belongs to God (2:20a).
- Might, or power, belongs to God (2:20b).
- God changes times and seasons (2:21a).
- God removes kings (2:21b).
- God sets up kings (2:21c).
- God gives wisdom to the wise (2:21d).
- God gives knowledge to those men who have understanding (2:21e).
- God reveals deep and secret things (2:22a, 28,29,47).
- God knows what is in the darkness (2:22b).
- The light, or illumination, dwells with God (2:22c).
- God gave Daniel wisdom and might (2:23a).

- God made known to Daniel what he and his friends prayed for (2:23b).
- God made known to Nebuchadnezzar what would take place in the latter days (2:28,45).
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom (2:37a; 5:18, 21).
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar power (2:37b).
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar strength (2:37c).
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar glory (2:37d; 5:18).
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar beasts of the earth and fowls of heaven (2:38a).
- God made Nebuchadnezzar ruler (2:38b).
- The kingdom of the God of heaven will never be destroyed (2:44a; 6:26).
- The Kingdom of God will not be left to another successor (2:44b).
- The Kingdom of God will break all other kingdoms in pieces (2:44c).
- The Kingdom of God will stand forever (2:44d).
- God the God of gods (2:47a).
- God is the Lord of kings (2:47b).
- God is able to deliver His people (3:17a).
- God will deliver His people (3:17b).
- God sent His angel and delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace (3:28).

- There is no god who can deliver like God (3:29).
- God wrought signs and wonders to Nebuchadnezzar (4:2).
- God's signs are great (4:3a).
- God's wonders are mighty (4:3b).
- God's kingdom is everlasting (4:3c).
- God's dominion is from generation to generation (4:3d, 34).
- God rules in the kingdom of men (4:17a, 25, 32).
- God gives kingdoms to whomever He wills (4:17b, 25, 32; 5:21).
- God sets over kingdoms the basest of men (4:17c).
- God decreed what came upon Nebuchadnezzar (4:24).
- God's dominion is everlasting (4:34).
- All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before God (4:35a).
- God does according to His will in the army of heaven (4:35b).
- God does according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth (4:35c).
- No one can restrain God's hand (4:35d).
- No one can ask God what He is doing (4:35e).
- The Lord gave Nebuchadnezzar majesty (5:18a, 19).
- The Lord gave Nebuchadnezzar honor (5:18b).

- Belshazzar’s breath was in God’s hand (5:23).
- God numbered Belshazzar’s kingdom and finished it (5:26).
- God weighed Belshazzar in the balances and found him deficient (5:27).
- God gave the Babylonian kingdom to the Medes and the Persians (5:28).
- God is the Living God (6:20, 26).
- God sent His angel and delivered Daniel from the lion’s den (6:22).
- God is steadfast forever (6:26a).
- God’s dominion will be unto the end (6:26b).
- God delivers (6:27a).
- God rescues (6:27b).
- God works signs and wonders in heaven (6:27c).
- God works signs and wonders in earth (6:27d).
- God delivered Daniel from the power of the lions (6:27).

There are SIXTY-FIVE specific affirmations concerning the God of heaven – all mentioned in chapters one through six! Daniel is mentioned fifty-eight times. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are mentioned fifteen times. Nebuchadnezzar is mentioned thirty-two times. Babylon is mentioned sixteen times. Belshazzar is mentioned six times. Babylon’s wise men are mentioned thirteen times.

“God” is mentioned 39 times, “Lord” 3 times, “Most High” 3 times, “He” (referring to Deity) 24 times, “Him” (referring to Deity) 6 times . . . etc. – all in the first six chapters of Daniel.

Tell me, who is emphasized in this book? Who protected the four children of Judah? Who gifted them? Who delivered them? Who raised up Nebuchadnezzar, humbled him, and restored his kingdom to

him? Who brought Belshazzar down? Who gave Babylon to the Medes and the Persians? Who revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dreams? Who revealed the writing on Belshazzar's palace wall? This is a book that declares the working of the God of heaven, His Sovereignty, His purpose, and His will. The earth is the Lord's, as well the fulness of it (Psa 24:1). It is still "HIS" field (Matt 13:24) – the place where He is working out His purpose regarding mankind, created in His own image.

WE CANNOT FORGET

We cannot forget how God has spoken to this point. Things that have been declared concerning the Lord have prepared us for this section of Daniel. Scripture is not random in its presentation. It has focus – Divine focus, and objective as well. The Spirit has shaped and cultured our thinking in the first six chapters. If we have received His message and perceived His intention, we have become acutely conscious of the God of heaven. We have seen the inferiority of earthly governments and rulers. The impotence of mere circumstance has also been established. The earth, even though defiled by the fall, remains the arena in which the God of heaven works. It is still true, "the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa 6:3).

THE NATURE OF THE PROPHECIES

The prophecies before us have a certain characteristic that is worthy of note. Both kings and kingdoms will be described according to their character, as well as times and circumstances. They will be called by names that describe character, not outward appearance: i.e., "winds," "sea," "beasts," "lion," "eagles's wings," "feet of a man," "a man's heart," "bear," "three ribs in the mouth," "leopard," "four wings of a fowl," "four heads," "great iron teeth," "ten horns," "little horn," "eyes like the eyes of a man," and "a mouth speaking great things." These are found in the text we are presently considering (verses 1-8).

THE EMPHASIS

Scripture was never written to provide a mere historical record of the past, or a chronology of events for the future. Of themselves, such facts are powerless, and often even detract from the God who inspired them to be recorded. The emphasis of this part of Daniel is not what will happen, but WHY things will take place. The point will not be who is involved, but the nature of those involved. We will behold the utter futility of opposing the God of heaven, or operating in the earth by any agenda other than His. This world DOES belong to God, and those residing in it are answerable to Him.!

In addressing this text, I will confine myself to what I perceive to be God's intention. My objective is not to attach names, governments, and times to the text where God Himself has not done so, or apparently so implied. The secret to avoiding confusion in this passage is not forgetting what has been declared concerning the God of heaven to this point. This is a record of His working, His purpose, and His will! The invincibility of His will is affirmed.

A DREAM DURING THE FIRST YEAR

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

As you can see, the book of Daniel is not written chronologically. After recounting the “lion’s den” experience, the prophet now reaches back several years to recount things the Lord had made known to him. There is a reason for this. In the first part of his book, Daniel recounts the dreams and visions given to others – all of which were interpreted and expounded by himself. Now we begin a section of the book that focuses on things made known to Daniel alone. This is the Lord’s personal ministry him.

The matters now made known and expounded to Daniel are more for the body of Christ than anyone else. Worldly empires are mentioned, but the matters revealed extend far beyond them – even into eternity itself.

THE FIRST YEAR OF BELSHAZZAR

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon . . .” The “first year” of Belshazzar’s reign was approximately fourteen years before the “lion’s den” experience – somewhere between 556-553 B.C. It is estimated Daniel was about 65-68 years old when he had this dream, or about 52 years after he had been taken captive to Babylon. We cannot be sure of these numbers, but they provide a sort of index of the span of time during which God worked with and through Daniel. If these figures are correct, Daniel was about eighty-two when he was thrown into the lion’s den. Previously I mentioned he could have been no less that seventy years of age when Darius had condemned him. At any rate, it is rather remarkable to consider these things.

This is the ONLY thing God noted that occurred during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign. The eighth chapter notes another dream Daniel had during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign (8:1). The only other Divine comment on Belshazzar related to his last hours upon the earth. He received a message from God early in the evening, and was killed later than night. In heaven’s eyes, this man was wholly insignificant. I do not doubt that countless other individuals also fall into this category.

Daniel’s Ministry

According to accepted Bible chronology, Daniel’s ministry occurred during especially dry and desolate spiritual times. His ministry, starting with his captivity, extending from around 606 B.C. until 535 B.C. – a period of seventy-one years. To provide a context for what we will now behold, a table of the Prophets living during that time is provided below. These dates are not intended to be precise, but are generally correct.

- Zephaniah - 618 B.C. - ?
- Habakkuk - 606 B.C. - ?
- Ezekiel - 596 B.C. - 571 B.C.
- Joel - 592 B.C. - ?
- Jeremiah - 627 B.C. - 560 B.C. (Writes Lamentations around 586-583 B.C.)
- Zerubbabel begins rebuilding the Temple - 536 B.C.
- Ezra - 536 B.C. - 458 B.C.
- Haggai and Zechariah - 520 B.C. - ?
- Esther - 480 B.C. - ?
- Malachi - 450 B.C. - ?
- Nehemiah rebuilds the walls - 444 B.C.

A Lesson to be Learned

There is surely a lesson to be learned in this perspective. Spiritually dry times are not impossible times! The eyes of the Lord are still ranging throughout the whole earth, seeking to show Himself strong toward those whose hearts are perfect toward Him (2 Chron 16:9). Such a man was found in Daniel. Not only was He given to see something from God, what he was given was extraordinary. The revelations given to Daniel are still challenging to those who are in Christ Jesus and can handle the Word of God.

The people of God are not to complain about the spiritually depraved times and places in which they find themselves. Rather, maintaining their integrity, they are to seek for fresh manna from above. We have Daniel as an example that such efforts are not in vain.

Today, the church has been captivated by spiritual Babylon. All manner of abuses and corruption are about us – just as they were about Daniel. But all is not lost. If we have a heart for the things of God, we can receive from God, even as Daniel did, during “the first year of Belshazzar!” This is not intended to be a mere negative view.

DANIEL HAD A DREAM

“ . . . Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed . . . ” Other versions read, “saw a dream and visions in his mind,” NASB “had a dream and visions passed through his mind,” NIV and “saw a dream, and visions came into his head.” BBE

The dream to which Daniel refers consisted of a series of visions – like chapters in a book. This was an extended revelation from God in which much was made known. The manner in which He governs the world will be revealed.

While Daniel’s body was heavy with sleep, his mind was productive, receiving from God and personally taking due note of what was seen.

The Same Four Kingdoms

The four kingdoms that were the subject of this dream and visions are the same four depicted by Nebuchadnezzar's dream . Here, however additional insights will be given. Nebuchadnezzar's dream revealed the deteriorating nature of the kingdoms of the world, confirming they must all eventually give way to the Kingdom of God. Thus, the most significant kingdoms of the world went from gold to iron mixed with clay – from a solitary political entity to divided kingdoms that could not stand.

This vision will show the character of earthly governments – that they are beastly, devouring, and highly oppressive. They are a depiction of the ultimate expression of “flesh,” or the fallen nature. In them we will behold how sin dominates the race, even when “the flesh” is in its most refined, organized, and illustrious state.

The Dream Was Written

“ . . . then he wrote the dream . . . ” Daniel apparently recorded the dream when he received it. Unlike Nebuchadnezzar who dreamed of the same four kingdoms, Daniel awakened to recall in perfect detail what had been made known to him in a dream. This was owing to his affiliation with God through faith. The record he gave of the dream was precise in every way, for “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet 1:20-21).

The Dream Was Summarized

“ . . . and told the sum of the matters.” Other versions read, “telling the main facts,” NKJV “related the following summary of it,” NASB “wrote down the substance of the dream,” NIV “he wrote down the dream,” NRSV Daniel was empowered by heaven to write this record.

The idea of the word “sum” is that Daniel wrote down the chief components of the dream. It is not that he wrote only those main points. Rather, his record was like building a house. First he erected the foundation and its pillars, then suspended the details of the dream upon them. To put it another way, he first stepped back and wrote an overview of the whole matter, then proceeded to open up the various components of the dream.

Daniel's words are intended to confirm that he wrote the dream in its entirety, missing none of its details, capturing all of its message, and recording the heavenly perspective.

FOUR WINDS FROM HEAVEN

“ 2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.”

A VISION BY NIGHT

“I saw in my vision by night . . .” Daniel receives this vision, by means of a dream, when his flesh was at its weakest point . He obtained it when the world has lost its distracting power, and his enemies were at rest. Yet, when he awoke, he had perfect recollection of what he had seen, and the lucidity to write it down in precise summary and detail. This was of the Lord, and unveils some of the involvements of inspiration.

WINDS FROM HEAVEN

“ . . . behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.” Other versions read, “the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea,” NKJV “the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea,” NIV “the four winds of heaven brake forth upon the great sea,” ASV “four winds of heaven violently moving the great sea,” BBE and “the four winds of the heavens are coming forth to the great sea.” YLT

In addition to this text, there are frequent references in Scripture to “four winds.”

- DIVINE JUDGMENT. “And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come” (Jer 49:36).
- A HEAVENLY QUICKENING. “Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live” (Ezek 37:9).
- THE RISE OF A GREAT POWER. “Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven” (Dan 8:8).
- DIVINE JUDGMENT. “And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those” (Dan 11:4).
- DIVINE JUDGMENT. “Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I

have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD” (Zec 2:6).

- **THE GATHERING OF THE SAVED.** “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Mat 24:31).
- **THE GATHERING OF THE SAVED.** “And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven” (Mark 13:27).
- **DIVINE CONTROL.** “And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree” (Rev 7:1).

The Lesson to be Learned

Each of these texts are declarations of the rule of heaven. As Daniel previously affirmed to Nebuchadnezzar, “the heavens do rule” (Dan 4:26). This was the single lesson Nebuchadnezzar had to learn, and it required seven years in the open field with the wild beasts to do so. However, Nebuchadnezzar is not the only one intended to learn this lesson. Belshazzar was judged because he did not learn “the most high God rules in the kingdoms of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses” NKJV (5:21).

The fact that Daniel recorded these things confirms that God intends for us to learn this as well . This world is not governed by its princes, but by God Almighty. Nations neither rise nor fall independently of Him. Kings are not elevated or deposed without Him. They do not come and go under their own power!

Whatever freedom men possess terminates abruptly at the determined purpose of God. There is a level of Divine activity that stands apart from human involvement – an aspect of Divine rule that is executed without any possibility of being thwarted or contravened. Examples of such works include the creation (Gen 1:1) the deposing of Satan in the beginning, and his bruising through Christ’s death (Heb 2:14). There is also spoiling of principalities and powers through the cross (Col 2:15). Then there was the raising up of Pharaoh (Ex 9:16), the calling of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), the sending of the Messiah (Gal 4:4), and the birth of the church (Acts 2:1-41).

The four winds of heaven speak of powerful and irresistible Divine workings. This text contains some similarities to the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters, or the chaotic deep, prior to creation (Gen 1:2). In this text, as Divine influences move upon the troubled sea of humanity, four governments will surface. They will be the same four governments revealed in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the multi-metaled image. Now, however, their character will be revealed, as well as the manner in which they will develop their various and appointed rules.

The Sea

The “great sea” is considered to be the Mediterranean Sea upon whose coast Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome were located – the four empires that will now be expounded, and which were introduced in the second chapter of Daniel under the figure of a single image.

Out of social and political trouble and turmoil, and under the government of God, four powerful nations will arise. They will not appear simultaneously, but will come in succession. Their appearance, however, though from a troubled environment, will be under the strict control of God Almighty, and they will not continue one single second past the boundary of His purpose.

Remember, God is the “Governor among the nations” (Psa 22:28), and the “Lord of kings” (Dan 2:47). For some, this means everything appears to be, or is obviously under the control of God. However, that is not the case at all. According to appearance, things seem out of control and chaotic. That is precisely why the Sovereignty of God is repeatedly affirmed, lest we become confused by visual aspects.

Worldly Governments

Almost all worldly governments have originated as the result of social unrest and agitation, whether they be altogether new, or representative of political change.

The Church

It is the wicked who are “like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa 57:20-21). Mark it well, the church is not like a troubled sea, it is the wicked who are so. Before Jesus comes to people in power, they are like the sea of Galilee amidst a violent storm (Mark 4:37-38). After He comes, they are like a vast sea that has been put to rest and thus experiences a placid calm (Mark 4:39). But the world is not so. Outside of Christ its people are like a turbulent and restless sea, foaming out its shame in distress and social agitation.

It is out of this unrest that these four great beasts rise, one after another. They are all brutal, destructive, and violent. They get their way by force, and thus all of them are said to have animalistic traits.

FOUR GREAT AND DIFFERENT BEASTS

“ 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.” Out of the turbulence of humanity and political unrest, four awesome beasts appear. They have no perfect parallel in the natural creation.

GREAT BEASTS

“ . . . four great beasts . . . ” The word “great” means domineering in character and eminent in power, doing great things. From the standpoint of headship, these beasts “are four kings” (7:17). From the standpoint of their operation, they are four kingdoms, or global powers (7:23,24) – governments that reigned over the world, subjecting it by political strength, not arbitration.

Therefore, as in the previous part of Daniel, kings stand for the kingdom over which they preside. Thus, in the image of Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream, the various components of the image stood for kingdoms (2:37,39,40,41,42,44), yet also stood for kings (2:37,44). These beasts, therefore, are four specific kingdoms ruled by specific kings. Again, we will find they are the same kingdoms and kings as were introduced in the second chapter of Daniel.

Wild, Yet Governed

While they were governed by God, they did not know it, just as the beasts of creation are ruled by God, yet know it not. As it is written, “The wild beats of the field are mine” (Psa 50:11). God has often destroyed people and lands by means of wild and untamed creatures. He sent devouring locusts upon Egypt (Ex 10:14-15), and spoke of causing wild beasts to pass through a country, leaving it desolate (Lev 26:22; Ezek 14:15). He also sent lions among certain nations to destroy some of them because they did not fear the Lord (2 Kgs 17:25).

A Perspective from Revelation

The book of Revelation also speaks of beastly like powers, or governments. Spoken within the framework of the New Covenant, one of these beasts is said to ascend from “the bottomless pit” (Rev 11:7). By this, the Spirit means this power is animated by the devil, though under the ultimate control of God. John also saw another beast “rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns” (13:1). This beast will parallel the fourth beast of our text. Still another beast was seen “coming out of the earth,” docile like a lamb, yet speaking as a dragon, with Satanic tones and emphasis (13:11). This beast represents the false church, which functions organizationally after the manner of the governments of this world.

Without being unduly distracted by these considerations, there is a point to be made before proceeding any further. Earthly governments, or the attempts of men to govern, have a beastly quality about them. Eventually, all such governments come against God, repudiating His truth and opposing His people – even though government has been ordained by God (Rom 13:1-7). We have unfortunately seen this inevitable tendency in our own nation. This circumstance is precisely why the Kingdom of God will devastate all other kingdoms (Dan 2:44). They have the seed of mortality in them , and

consequently gravitate to the earth, and tend to be a locus for Satanic activity.

CAME UP FROM THE SEA

“ . . . came up from the sea . . . ”

The natural creation had its origin by the Word of the Lord speaking over a chaotic domain, where darkness covered the face of the deep (Gen 1:2). These beasts, or kingdoms, surfaced from a turbulent and restless sea of fallen personalities – nations of men who were dominated by sin, ruled by the devil, and ultimately controlled by the God of heaven.

These kings rise out of great civil and political commotion and unrest. Whereas the heavenly kingdom comes from a peaceful and unagitated environment – like a stone cut out of a mountain without hands (2:34,35) – the governments of the world are spawned in agitation and fermentation.

The sea is inconsistent, often moving from placid calm to treacherous tempest with little warning. It is restless, having been in continuous motion and agitation from the moment of its creation until now. It also is potentially destructive. When it throws its stormy waves against the shore, there is little that can stand in its wake. This is all a fitting picture of the sea of humanity out of which these kings and kingdoms arose.

Under Divine Control

Yet, while all of this is certainly true of humanity, yet in the matter of kingdoms surfacing from this sea of personalities, the Lord is ever present. Divine activity is seen in the “four winds of heaven” striving upon the sea. These winds were under the control of heaven, and were working upon the sea of humanity cause kingdoms to both rise and fall. Later in this book, specific mention will be made of two spiritual forces that were associated with two of the kingdoms to be revealed in this text: “the prince of Persia,” and “the prince of Greece” (10:20). While these were not holy forces, they were in subjection to the holy angels, as that text indicates. The point to see here is this: while, according to appearance, the world appeared to be in total chaos and agitation, the Most High was still ruling over it, working all things together for the good of those who love Him, and fulfilling His purpose to the finest detail. We must not fail to see this. It is critical to the understanding of this book.

DIVERSE FROM ONE ANOTHER

“ . . . diverse one from another.” Other versions read, “different from one another,” NKJV and “each different from the others.” NIV

These are not normal beasts, and have no perfect parallel in nature. They are aberrations of what is normal. That is why they are pictured in such a unique way. They are to governments what Solomon was to wise men, Job was to suffering men, and Paul was to the Apostles. They stand out,

being unique and excelling. **In them we will see the utter futility of opposing God – even in a well organized manner – for all of these governments took their stand against the Lord. Through them, we will be shown the absolute superiority of the kingdom of God.** The best, most organized, most ruthless, and most cunning of all human conglomerations cannot stand before the God of heaven! His Kingdom reigns over all other kingdoms, and will be so revealed (4:3).

Further, these all stand alone by their description. They are not the same, but each one is unique, and different from the others. One is not the governmental clone of the other, or just another of the same kind. None are a mere continuation of the one preceding them. All are the same in that they are domineering and destructive. The nature, manner, and objective of their dominion, however, will differ.

THE FIRST BEAST

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

The first government that is depicted is the Babylonian, headed up by Nebuchadnezzar. It is more than interesting that Nebuchadnezzar is referred by both Jeremiah and Ezekiel as a devouring lion and a great eagle with great wings.

- “ The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant” (Jer 4:7).
- “Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?” (Jer 49:19 with 46:26 and 49:28,30).
- “And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; A great eagle with great wings , longwinged, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar” (Ezek 17:3 with verse 12).

In the second chapter of Daniel Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian kingdom were viewed as a “head of gold.” There, the majesty of the kingdom was viewed. Here, its nature is revealed.

This approach to Divine description should not confuse us, for it is the manner of the Lord to so instruct us. Thus Jesus is viewed as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29), “the great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20), “King of kings” (1 Tim 6:15), “the Deliverer” (Rom 11:26), and “the Head of every man” (1 Cor 11:3). His church is described as His “body” (Eph 1:22-23), “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15), and His “bride” (Rev 21:9). Satan is said to be “that old serpent” (Rev 12:9), “the dragon” (Rev 20:2), “a king,” and “Apollyon” (Rev 9:11). In using this type of language the Spirit shows us the nature or character of the person or persons being described. This is called apocalyptic language, and is quite prominent in both Daniel and Revelation. It is intended to instruct us, not intrigue us, tutor us, not tantalize us.

LIKE A LION

“The first was like a lion . . .” This is the first beast to rise out of the sea – the first of the four prominent empires. This is a heavenly view, not a strictly historical one as perceived by men. The Egyptian empire, for example, existed before the Babylonian one. It was, indeed, a prominent one when Israel is the focus of our attention. However, Daniel is giving a much higher perspective of the purpose of God, in which Egypt is not as prominent. The Babylonian, or Assyrian empire, was founded by Nimrod (Gen 10:8-10), and increased by the Assyrians (2 Kgs 19:35-36). However, it was brought to its apex through Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans. Therefore, the Spirit begins with Babylon, when the Assyrian empire was at its fullest and strongest. At that point, it was like a mighty lion, ruling all lesser kingdoms. With a dignified presence it strode upon the earth, noted for its majesty, glory, and power.

Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon were unique – like gold among metals, a lion among beasts, and an eagle among birds.

EAGLE’S WINGS

“ . . . and had eagle's wings . . .” This refers to the swiftness with which this kingdom swept other kingdoms under its dominion. Lands were given to Nebuchadnezzar, and “all nations” served him (Jer 27:6). While all of this happened swiftly, it was actually due to the working of God who “put a yoke of iron” upon the neck of the nations, causing them to serve Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 28:14). Egypt was also given to him for wages (Ezek 29:19).

Thus, the imagery of a lion with eagles’ wings depicts the rapid and ruthless devouring of many nations. The Babylonian empire spread quickly and effectively.

THE WINGS WERE PLUCKED

“ . . . I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked . . .” Other versions read, “its wings were plucked off,” NKJV “Its wings were torn off,” NIV and “its wings were pulled off.” BBE

The ability to move swiftly in conquering other nations was thus removed – like pulling the wings off of a swift and high flying eagle. They were pulled off by the Lord, not men. The same God who gave Nebuchadnezzar the power to move across the landscape of the world with little or no resistance, took that ability from him and his kingdom.

It is as though God drew a boundary line beyond which Nebuchadnezzar could not pass. The Babylonian empire, therefore, ceased to be an aggressive and conquering one. I do not question this involves the time when Nebuchadnezzar was driven from among men and made to eat grass with the beasts of the field. His eagles' wings were pulled off!

A Lesson

We must learn not to put our trust in seeming successes. The same God who causes men to increase and flourish can take away that ability – like tearing the wings off of a mighty eagle.

LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH

“ . . . and it was lifted up from the earth . . . ” Other versions read, “lifted up from the ground.” NIV and “lifted off from the earth.” Septuagint The idea is that the lion-like beast was lifted up from all fours, ceasing to be like a lion. The next phrase affirms it was replaced upon earth as a mere man. Thus, all of its dominance was lost. In other words, the Babylonian kingdom came to an end.

MADE TO STAND ON FEET LIKE A MAN

“ . . . and made stand upon the feet as a man . . . ” Being lifted up from its stance as a devouring lion, the Lord put the Babylonian, or Chaldean, kingdom back on earth as a weak man – as compared to a dominating lion. Now the empire became subservient to another kingdom, just like other kingdoms had once served it. The phrase “like a man” does not emphasize man’s glory, but his inherent weakness. This is the sense in which several texts speak of “man,” as the following texts indicate.

- “What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?” (Job 15:14)
- “Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?” (Job 22:2)
- “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psa 8:4).

- “LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away” (Psa 144:4).

A MAN'S HEART WAS GIVEN TO IT

“ . . . and a man's heart was given to it.” Other versions read, “a human mind was also given to it,” NASB “and given the mind of a man.” TNK

As I have already noted, this is not intended to show the superiority of man over the kingdom of beasts. Rather, it accentuates the humiliation of a once proud empire to the state of a solitary and weak ordinary man. The king and his kingdom went from being bold as a lion to being fearful and intimidated as a mortal would be before a ferocious lion or other wild and powerful beast of the field.

Do not fail to note this heart was “GIVEN” to the beast. That is, it was assigned to him by the God of heaven. The same God who caused this kingdom to become prominent brought it down to the ground. The same God who raised up a king of prominence and power, brought him down in infamy and shame.

Thus something of the details of the demise of the Babylonian empire are provided. In the vision of the great image, it was only revealed that another inferior kingdom would succeed the Babylonian empire. In this vision, the Lord more precisely reveals to Daniel that all of this would be accomplished by the government of God Himself. He would tear off the wings that enabled the empire to spread. He would change the posture of the government from that of a domineering lion to that of a weak man. He would also take away the lust for power and make that kingdom a servant of another kingdom, as declared in the triumph of Darius (5:31). He would change the nature of that once powerful government from that of domination to one of servitude. This reveals something of HOW the God of heaven governs His world.

THE SECOND BEAST

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

This will be a depiction of the Medo-Persian empire, headed up by Darius and Mede and Cyrus the Persian. The particular emphasis will be on the Persians, for that aspect of the kingdom became the dominant one, with the Median kingdom gradually being absorbed by it. This is the kingdom that was

represented by the “chest and arms of silver” of Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream (2:32). That former representation emphasized the inferiority of the Medo-Persian empire to that of Babylon: i.e., “and after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee” (2:39). Just as silver is inferior to gold, so this second kingdom is inferior to the first. Secondly, this is the kingdom that would receive the fallen kingdom of Babylon, as God revealed to Belshazzar in the mysterious writing on the wall: “PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians ” (Dan 5:28).

LIKE A BEAR

“ And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear . . . ” The inferiority of this second kingdom is not meant to suggest it lacked power or influence. Therefore, it is pictured as a bear, noted for its strength and agility, though not for any majesty. Coincidentally, the largest species of bears are said to be found in Media, “a mountainous, cold, and rough country covered with woods.” ADAM CLARKE

The bear is noted for being both cunning and ferocious. Lamentations 3:10 refers to the cunning nature of the bear, who lies in wait for its prey. The bear is also renowned for being fierce when it is hungry or robbed of its young. Thus God speaks through Hosea, “I will meet them like a bear deprived of her cubs; I will tear open their rib cage” NKJV (Hosea 13:8). Other texts also make reference to the savage nature of the bear (2 Sam 17:8; Prov 17:12). Perhaps it is more than coincidence that young David protected his flock by killing both a lion and a bear (1 Sam 17:36-37).

The figure of a bear emphasizes the cruelty of the Medo-Persians , for which they were especially noted. Isaiah prophesied of the Medes defeating Babylon, and emphasized their bear-like cruelty. “Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb ; their eye shall not spare children . And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah” (Isa 13:17-19).

A Clarification

It might appear confusing that Isaiah speaks of the Medes (Isa 13:17), Daniel of the Medes and the Persians (5:28), and the overthrow of this kingdom as that of Persia (10:20). This was a combined kingdom, depicted by two arms of silver. At the forefront of their dominion, the focus is upon Darius the Mede. At the latter, it is upon Cyrus the Persian. Yet, it was a single empire. For example, when Darius the Mede drafted a law, it was in strict accord with “the law of the Medes and Persians” (6:8,12,15). In this vision, Daniel will be shown the particular prominence of the Persians.

An Example of Persian Barbarity

We have an example of the execution Persian law in the sixth chapter of Daniel. There, because of the false charges of Daniel’s accusers, their children and their wives were thrown into the lions’ den with them (Dan 6:24). Compare the reaction of Darius the Mede to Daniel’s accusers, with that of

Nebuchadnezzar toward those who accused Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan 3:24-29). He asked his counselors concerning who was cast into the fire. They were also among those who examined the three delivered men, confirming there was no hurt upon them. But they were not apparently thrown into the fire. The Medes and Persians possessed no such civility.

Here was a kingdom that was noted for being ruthless, particularly when resisted. It was savage in war, having no mercy upon its enemies. Jeremiah also spoke of this kingdom, with particular regard to its overthrow of Babylon. He refers to them as “spoilers,” or “plunderers,” causing all the wounded of Babylon to “groan” (Jer 51:48-56).

Something to Note

In Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, four kingdoms were seen. They were successive kingdoms noted for deterioration in value: gold, silver, brass, iron, and iron mingled with clay. In Daniel’s vision of the same four empires, they are seen as ferocious, and increasing in their ferocity : lion, bear, a leopard with wings and four heads, and a “great and terrible” beast, unusually strong, with iron teeth, breaking in pieces, trampling the residue with its feet. Thus, as value decreased, ruthlessness increased. As majesty faded, cruelty and pitilessness grew. Just as it is the nature of human kingdoms to deteriorate in value, so it is also their tendency to increase in ruthlessness and opposition to God. That is the nature of worldly power.

You can see, therefore, what a serious transgression it is for the church of the Living God to adopt the manners of the world. When such a thing occurs, worth immediately begins to degenerate, and heartlessness begins to dominate. Both Daniel and John (in the Revelation) identify the corrupt church with its adoption of the ways of the world – particularly that of the governments of the world. Daniel will deal extensively with this corruption in the ninth and tenth chapters. That, in fact, is the reason for this and the following visions. It is preparing us for the introduction of the church, its corruption, and the ultimate triumph of the Lord Jesus and those aligned with Him. In order to truly profit from this section of scripture, it is imperative that we remember these things.

RAISED ITSELF ON ONE SIDE

“ . . . and it raised up itself on one side . . . ” Other versions read, “it supported itself on one side,” Septuagint “It was rearing up on one side,” NLT and “It was rearing up on one side.” BBE

Here is the depiction of a bear with four legs, raising itself up to stand on two. The immediate image that comes to mind is that of a bear standing on its hind legs. The other is that of a bear lying down raising itself up on one side – the right or the left.

Precisely how the bear raised itself up is really not the point. What is intended here is that one part of the government represented by the bear became dominant. Remember, this represents “the

Medes and the Persians,” the two silver arms of the image in Nebuchadnezzar’s image. This is intended to confirm there came a point in time when the Persian part of the government took the control, becoming dominant. This occurred with the prominence of “Cyrus the Persian” (6:28). The reference to his reign in the last verse of the preceding chapter refers to his prominence , not the beginning of his political power.

From one point of view, Cyrus became prominent in order that he might be used by God to rebuild the Temple, destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Of that occasion, the last verse of Second Chronicles reads, “Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me ; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah” (2 Chron 36:23). This was done in order to fulfill the word prophesied by Jeremiah – a word fulfilled by God stirring up the spirit of Cyrus the Persian (2 Chron 36:22). Concerning the work of rebuilding the Temple, God referred to Cyrus as “My shepherd,” declaring he would perform everything God had pleased (Isa 44:28). He also referred to Cyrus as His “anointed” (Isa 45:1).

In order to equip Cyrus for his work, the Lord gave him power to subdue nations , stripping kings of their power, and opening the gates of their cities to defeat. The testimony of this empowerment is quite vivid. “Thus saith the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus , whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him ; and I will loose the loins of kings , to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight : I will break in pieces the gates of brass , and cut in sunder the bars of iron : And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD , which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else” (Isa 45:1-6).

Isaiah’s prophecy, as well as that of Second Chronicles 36:22-23, is another portrayal of the “bear” raising up on one side – the Persian portion of the government becoming dominant through Cyrus. In history, this man is known as “Cyrus the Great, conqueror who founded the Achaemenian empire, centred on Persia and comprising the Near East from the Aegean Sea eastward to the Indus River. He is also remembered in the Cyrus legend – first recorded by Xenophon, Greek soldier and author, in his Cyropaedia – as a tolerant and ideal monarch who was called the father of his people by the ancient Persians.”BRITANNICA ENCYCLOPEDIA, 2002

THREE RIBS BETWEEN ITS TEETH

“ . . . and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it . . . ” The ribs were “between” the bears teeth, as though violently torn out of its victims. An angry bear is represented as doing precisely this by Hosea, which text I have already mentioned. “I will meet them like a bear deprived of her cubs; I will tear open their rib cage ” (Hosea 13:8). Other versions read, “I will tear open their ches,” NASB and “I will attack and rip them open.” NIV

This imagery depicts the violent overthrow of three other inferior, yet beastly, kingdoms. It is generally understood that these kingdoms are “Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt,” which were conquered by the Medo-Persians. DELITZSCH and KEIL , CLARKE, and many others Whether the text is intended to be this precise or not, I am not sure. The point being made is that this empire, through aggressive violence, literally chewed up other nations, bringing them under its rule. We know from history that all of Asia Minor finally acknowledged Cyrus and Persia to be their head. As I have already mentioned, from the higher perspective, the God of heaven gave Cyrus this power in order that the Temple in Jerusalem might be built without any effective opposition. That is how precisely the Lord governs this world!

ARISE AND DEVOUR

“ . . . and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.” Having overthrown at least three nations, the Medo-Persian “bear” was not satisfied. This compulsion, however, comes from the heavens, which do rule. The word “they” refers to angelic powers, not the voices of men, for men have no power to give such a command.

Something to Consider

One must remember the type of world during which all of this took place. It is vividly described in the first chapter of Romans, which paints the picture of the Gentile world without any acknowledged Divine influence. The dominance of sin is so compelling it staggers the sensitive heart.

- They knew not God (21a).
- They glorified Him not as God (21b).
- They were not thankful (21c).
- They became vain in their imaginations (21d).
- Their foolish heart was darkened (21e).
- They became fools, although they thought themselves to be wise (22).
- They changed the glory of the incorruptible God to corruptible likenesses of man and beast (23).
- God gave them up to uncleanness, to dishonor their bodies among themselves (24).

- They changed the truth of God into a lie (25a).
- They worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator (25b).
- God gave them up to vile affections, causing sodomy to erupt (26-27).
- They did not like to retain God in their knowledge (28a).
- God gave them over to a reprobate mind, so that they did things that were not proper (28b).
- They became filled with unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, and malignity (29a).
- They became whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful (29b-31).
- Although they knew the judgment of God through the flood and the tower of Babel, they continued to practice things deserving of death, also approving of others who did the same (v 32).

The condition of humanity was not excusable. It is my judgment that God used Cyrus to chastise the world, thus reducing how much they could devote themselves to the fulfillment of their lusts, and indulging in all manner of depraved living. From the standpoint of Cyrus and the Persians, they were extending their empire and gratifying their insatiable lust for power. From heaven's viewpoint, the wickedness of man was being restrained in order that the wrath of God might not be the more stirred up, as it was in the flood. The fact that God promised He would never again destroy the world with water did not mean He would take no measure to restrain the wickedness of men.

Over and above the manipulations of kings and kingdoms, the God of heaven was moving toward redemption.

THE THIRD BEAST

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

As Daniel continues to behold the vision, a third beast rises out of the turbulent waters of humanity. When the second beast appeared, the reason for the demise of the first beast was given: its wings were torn off, it was made to leave the posture of lion, standing like a man and becoming comparatively docile like a man. This time, however, the demise of the second kingdom is not delineated. Rather, the Spirit immediately moves to the third kingdom.

This kingdom was also identified in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It was represented by "its belly and thighs of brass" NKJV (2:32). This is the kingdom of Greece, as was revealed in a later vision given to Daniel (10:20). From the perspective of that first vision, it represented a decline in worth from the kingdom preceding it. In this vision, it is seen as increasing in violence and aggressiveness. This is the nature of all earthly kingdoms. They decrease in worth, and consequently become more aggressive to fulfill their own will.

LIKE A LEOPARD

" . . . lo another, like a leopard . . . " This is the Grecian, or Macedonian, empire, which is represented as a gross monster: a swift leopard with four wings and four heads.

The leopard is such a ferocious animal that it is considered a mighty work of God if it chooses to lie down with a young goat (Isa 11:6). Jeremiah depicts a leopard as an animal who watches with a keen eye, ready to devour whenever the opportunity occurs (Jer 5:6). Hosea presents the leopard in a similar way, saying he waits in the way to devour (Hos 13:7). Thus, the leopard is noted for its cunningness and agility – moving swiftly, and devouring its victim. It is an animal of prey, looking for things to devour. Some observations concerning this animal are in order.

- It is next in dignity to the lion.
- It is distinguished for its fierce nature.
- It is swift, moving rapidly.
- It patiently waits for its victims, suddenly springing upon them.

We may look, therefore, for this third king and kingdom to be noted for the rapid defeat of its enemies – an empire than quickly and effectively extends its borders with great wisdom and ingenuity.

This is a representation of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.), who completely conquered the Medo-Persian empire between 334 and 330 B.C., when only a little over twenty years of age. This kingdom came into being nearly two hundred years after Daniel's vision. At the time of this revelation, there were no apparent indications that Greece would become supreme, or a world power.

FOUR WINGS ON ITS BACK

“ . . . which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl . . . ”

Not the powerful wings of the eagle, as Babylon, but four wings of a lower order of fowl. Yet, these enabled the leopard-like power to move with extraordinary swiftness. In twelve short years, Alexander conquered much of Europe, and all of Asia from the Adriatic Sea near Italy, to the Ganges River in Northern India – all of this before he was thirty-three years of age.

Yet, all of this is not intended to give glory to young Alexander, for he was but a pawn on the trestle board of eternal purpose. Here was a man – a young man – whom God raised up and empowered. He gave him the ability to conquer quickly and effectively. He was able to throw down the seemingly invincible Medo-Persian empire, and sweep kingdoms from Italy to India under his wing. Yet, even this rapidly-spreading empire will come to an end, and will be replaced by another.

FOUR HEADS

“ . . . the beast had also four heads . . . ” Here Daniel speaks of a beast with “four heads.” The book of Revelation speaks of one with “seven heads” (Rev 13:1). In both instances, the “heads ” speak of different kings that are resident within a single empire (Rev 13:7-8). Later in the book of Daniel, these same four heads will be identified as “four notable ones” (8:8), and “four kingdoms” that shall “stand up out of one nation” (8:22). Daniel eleven speaks of this kingdom being “divided” into four parts (11:4).

Historically, these “four heads” came into existence after the death of Alexander. The chief generals of his army, eager for power, seized differing parts of the kingdom. The four divisions, and their rulers, were,

- Thrace and Bithynia under Lysiamchus .
- Syria and the East under Seleucus .
- Egypt under Ptolemy .
- Macedonia under Cassander .

The Grecian, or Macedonian, kingdom continued under these four divisions until it was overcome and replaced by the Roman empire.

DOMINION GIVEN TO IT

“ . . . and dominion was given to it.” Other versions read, “it was given authority to rule,” NIV “and the power of a ruler was given to it,” BBE “was granted authority,” NJB and “Great authority was given to this beast.” NLT

Remember, “For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” NKJV (Rom 13:1). Greece did not get its power from men. Even the lofty spiritual ruler that dominated this kingdom could not commence the domination until the power of God was exerted against Persia (10:20). God is at the helm of politics and government! He is the One who “gives” various powers and authority. Behold how often the Spirit makes a point of this.

- A man’s heart was GIVEN to it (the lion – 7:4).
- Dominion was GIVEN to it (the leopard - 7:6).
- The Son of man was GIVEN dominion, and glory, and a kingdom (7:14).
- Judgment was GIVEN to the saints of the Most High God (7:22).
- An army was GIVEN over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered (8:12).
- A crown was GIVEN to a heavenly conqueror (Rev 6:2).
- Power was GIVEN for one to take peace from the earth (Rev 6:4).
- Power was GIVEN to death and hell over a fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, hunger, death, and beasts (Rev 6:8).
- Power was GIVEN four angels to hurt the earth and the sea (Rev 7:2).
- An angel was GIVEN much incense to offer with the prayers of the saints (Rev 8:3).
- A fallen personality was GIVEN the key to the bottomless pit (Rev 9:1).
- A swarm of locusts were GIVEN power upon the earth to do precisely what God wanted (Rev 9:3-5).
- A spiritual despot was GIVEN a mouth to speak great and blasphemous things (Rev 13:5).
- This same entity was GIVEN power to make war with the saints and overcome them. Power was also GIVEN him over all kindreds, tongues, and nations (Rev 13:7).

- Power was GIVEN to an angel to scorch men with fire (Rev 16:8).
- Judgment was GIVEN to those enthroned by the Lord (Rev 20:4).

These are only things pertaining to historical occurrences, as prophesied by Daniel and John. There is, however, an emphasis on this sort of teaching throughout Scripture.

- It is GIVEN to some to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God (Matt 13:11).
- There are some lofty sayings that can only be received by those to whom it is GIVEN (Matt 19:11).
- On the behalf of Christ, it is GIVEN to us to believe, and also to suffer for His sake (Phil 1:29).
- The “outer court,” or matters relating to entrance into the Kingdom of God, has been GIVEN to the Gentiles (Rev 11:2).
- The Holy Spirit is GIVEN to us (Rom 5:5).
- Particular and empowering grace is GIVEN to everyone in Christ (Rom 12:6).

All of these are intended to confirm to our hearts that this world, and all that is within it, are under the control of Almighty God. None of these things, regardless of their seeming threat, are meant to frighten those with faith. Rather, they confirm that God is in control, and that He is, in that control, working all things together for the good of those who love Him, and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).

In this particular passage, the Lord is assuring our hearts that He is moving things toward their appointed culmination. There is a Divine purpose that is driving the events of this world. Nothing is out of control.

Be Aware of These Things

Every person must give diligence to take heed to these things. They have been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Those who are eager for power and influence must take due note of this circumstance! God will not allow any kingdom to supplant His own. Ultimately, no purpose will flourish but His own, and all who are not in agreement with Him will be ground into powder. There is no way for worldly kingdoms to survive. The ultimate King is Jesus, and no other king can remain for long. The ultimate kingdom is the Kingdom of God, and no other kingdom will finally remain.

THE FOURTH BEAST

“ 7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.”

Remember, just as these kingdoms decreased in value, they are also increasing in ferocity and their opposition to the Most High God. Now we come to the fourth beast – and it is the worst and most devouring of all. This is the kingdom that succeeds the Grecian kingdom, and begins to extend itself even further than that historically remarkable kingdom. This beast has no parallel in any of the others, but stands absolutely unique.

This kingdom is the fourth one seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. If you recall that kingdom, and how it was represented in the great image, you will at once see some meaningful parallels. In the king’s dream, this kingdom was represented by “legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay” (Dan 2:33). In opening this matter up, the following was revealed to Daniel. “And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron : forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise . And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes , part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided ; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay” (2:40-43).

Divisions

As each succeeding kingdom appeared, division became more prominent – and division is the prelude to demise. The Babylonian, or Chaldean, kingdom was undivided. The Medo-Persian had two divisions. The Grecian kingdom had four divisions. This kingdom has ten division. Thus, while on the one hand kingdoms are becoming more fierce in their appearance, they are becoming more weak in their basic constitution, being divided.

Not A Particular Beast

The first kingdom was like a lion. The second was like a bear. The third was like a leopard. But there is no beast to which this kingdom is likened. That is because there was never anything like this before . This was the introduction of a different form of government – one that would afterwards be used by Satan to impose upon the professing church. In all of the preceding governments there was something natural, though parts were exaggerated: i.e., lion, bear, and leopard. But here, in this fourth beast, is something altogether unnatural.

This is the Roman Empire

The Roman empire is depicted by this fourth dreadful and terrible beast, the likes of which had never before been seen. The Babylonian, Chaldean, or Assyrian empire lasted around 230 years. The Medo-Persian empire extended over approximately the same number of years – 229. The Grecian kingdom lasted as long as 400 years. The Roman empire lasted for fourteen centuries. It was more extensive, more powerful, and more awesome than all the kingdoms before it. While Western civilization has been patterned after the social and political innovations of Rome, it is important to recognize heaven's assessment of this empire. It has no equal. It is more brutal and inhumane. It is the one that crucified the Lord of glory!

Not only does history attest that the Roman empire succeeded that of the Medo-Persian kingdom, Daniel is shown one other vital fact. This was the kingdom during which God would set up His everlasting kingdom (2:44). In this particular passage, the Son of man is introduced (v 13), and the giving of the Kingdom to Him (v 14).

DREADFUL AND TERRIBLE

“ . . . behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible . . . ” Other versions read “dreadful and terrifying,” NASB , “terrifying and frightening,” NIV and “a thing causing fear and very troubling.” BBE

The idea is that this kingdom struck terror into the hearts of those who confronted it. In strict accordance with the flesh, kingdoms were growing “worse and worse,” not only decreasing in moral worth, but increasing in all forms of debauchery and violence.

STRONG EXCEEDINGLY

“ . . . and strong exceedingly . . . ” This expression means the strength of this empire exceeded the strength of all that it opposed. None could withstand it.

IRON TEETH

“ . . . and it had great iron teeth . . . ” Other versions read “huge iron teeth,” NKJV and “large iron teeth.” NASB Once this kingdom got hold of its victims, there was no hope for them. It not only had the desire to destroy, but the means to do so as well.

IT DEVoured

“ . . . it devoured . . . ” Other versions read, “it hath consumed,” YLT “it ate its victims,” NJB and “eating.” DOUAY

The idea is that this kingdom rendered its enemies powerless and useless. They were reduced to nothingness by their encounter with this despotic power.

IT BRAKE IN PIECES

“ . . . and brake in pieces . . . ” Other versions read, “crushing some of it to bits,” BBE “crushing to atoms,” Septuagint and “it doth break small.” YLT

The three preceding empires were assimilated by the Romans, without maintaining their separate identity. They were swallowed up by the Roman empire, and beaten into oblivion, so they could not rise again.

Here was a ruthless empire that was hardened in heart, so that no mercy was found in it. Later in this chapter Daniel will be told of this very kingdom, “The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces” (Dan 7:23).

STAMPED THE RESIDUE WITH ITS FEET

“ . . . and stamped the residue with the feet of it . . . ” Other versions read, “trampled down the remainder with its feet,” NASB “trampled under foot whatever was left,” NIV and “trampled their remains underfoot.” NJB

The imagery is mind-boggling! With iron teeth this beast eats its opponents. What falls from his mouth is crushed into small pieces. Whatever is left from that is then trampled underfoot, as though pulverizing it into dust. Remember, this is heaven’s assessment of this government, which I believe is Rome, as attested by both history and the revelations associated with this “fourth beast.”

Kingdoms subdued by the Romans included Asia Minor, Syria, Cilicia, Greece and Macedonia, Spain, Gaul, Illyricum, part of Germany, and Britain. They were chewed up and rendered impotent by Rome’s invading armies, and made to pay obeisance to Rome as though they were nothing more than vassals.

DIFFERENT FROM ALL THE BEASTS

“ . . . and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it . . . ” Other versions read, “it was different from all the beasts that were before it,” NKJV “it was different from all the former beasts,” NIV “it was different from all the beasts that preceded it,” NRSV and “it was unlike to the other beasts.” DOUAY

There may have been some similarities between the first three kingdoms, depicted as a lion,

bear, and leopard. All were strong and predators. All were marked by a certain cunning nature. However, this fourth beast stands apart from them all. We should expect, therefore, that considerable commentary will be made concerning this beast, or kingdom. In fact, it will introduce some considerations that will bear directly upon the coming of the Lord Jesus, and the saints of the Most High God.

This is the beast concerning which Daniel will seek a special understanding (7:19). Much of our comments on this matter, therefore, will be reserved for later, when the Lord addresses this subject with extended teaching.

IT HAD TEN HORNS

“ . . . and it had ten horns.” Here is something that was not said of any of the other beasts – at least not in this vision. Later, the Medo-Persian empire will be depicted as a ram with “two horns” (8:3). These are described as “the kings of Media and Persia” (8:20).

In this text, however, there is a certain uniqueness concerning this beastly government that does not allow for a comparison of it with the second beast. Therefore, only it is said to have “horns,” and it has ten of them. These “ten horns” are mentioned two other times in this chapter.

- “ And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows” (Dan 7:20).
- “And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise : and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings” (Dan 7:24).

I understand these ten horns to parallel the ten toes of the image seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. In that dream, they were seen as a point of weakness. Here they are seen as a point where the power of the beast is exerted. On the one hand, these ten divisions would ultimately be the point from which the kingdom would be toppled. On the other hand, here they are represented as the means through which the government exercises its authority.

The passage also is to be considered in view of the Revelation given to John on Patmos. There he also saw a beast rise up out of the sea having “ten horns” (Rev 13:1). Later John is told these horns are “ten kings” (Rev 17:12), as depicted by “ten crowns” which sat upon them.

Daniel is also told these horns are “ten kings” that will rise out of the kingdom in question. Daniel prophesied at least 630 years before John, yet saw some of the very things John saw – Divinely ordained events on the calendar of heavenly purpose. The same God was speaking to them both – about

the same purpose, designed before the world began.

Something to Remember

Keep in mind, the first emperor of Rome was Augustus, who began his reign in B.C. 31, even though considerable influence had been exercised by the Roman government prior to that. Daniel's prophecy of the rise of Rome, therefore, preceded that rise by no less than 500 years!

I must reserve further comments on this beast until later, when the Holy Spirit will give an extended revelation of some of the appointed involvements of this beast within God's purpose.

I CONSIDERED THE HORNS

“ 8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.”

The uniqueness of this beast demanded further consideration. In God's kingdom, singularity is not to be ignored, but is always significant – either for good or evil. Blessed is the person who perceives this and inquires into things that appear mysterious at the first.

Many souls turn away from things that are different, or that soar above the norm. But this is not comely for the child of God. There are matters that require more attention, more thought, more meditation. The honey of truth that they contain cannot be casually drawn out, but must be obtained like sucking honey out of a rock (Deut 32:13).

I CONSIDERED THE HORNS

“I considered the horns . . .” Other versions read, “I was considering the horns,” NKJV “While I was contemplating the horns,” NASB “While I was thinking about the horns,” NIV and “I was watching the horns with care.” BBE

The next part of this vision occurred WHILE Daniel was pondering “the horns.” As he looked at them intently, he saw something taking place that could not have been seen unless he had been

concentrating on those horns, which depicted “ten kings.”

A Principle Seen Here

Suffice it to say, there are things that cannot be seen unless our hearts and minds are focused upon the truth. This is particularly true of those unusual and intriguing proclamations that stand out to the heart and mind. For those in Christ Jesus, these things relate to such things as justification, the imputation of righteousness, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the eternal purpose of God, to name a few. As we gaze upon such lofty things, something more will be shown to us. It is “in light” that we come to “see light” (Psa 36:9), or within illumination that we are illuminated.

ANOTHER LITTLE HORN

“ . . . and, behold, there came up among them another little horn . . . ” Other versions read, “and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them,” NKJV “and behold another little horn sprung out of the midst of them,” DOUAY “I saw another horn sprouting among them, a little one,” NJB and “suddenly another small horn appeared among them.” NLT

While he was looking upon, and considering, the ten horns, Daniel saw another little horn suddenly spring up, or sprout, in the midst of the ten. This is a new thing – something that will be given extensive attention in the remainder of this book. The word “little” applies to the beginning of this horn. Though little at the first, this “little horn” will become prominent.

Whatever is intended by this “little horn,” its presence was not to be found at the first. It came into existence during the prominence of this “fourth kingdom” (v 23), which was noted for having “ten kings” (v 24). What is represented by this “little horn” came from the same source as the other ten horns, and pertained to the same kingdom. It was unique, with some differing characteristics, yet operated on the same principle as the governments of the world – particularly this fourth, and most terrible and ruthless government.

Later in this chapter, the significance of this “little horn” will be made more clear. It will play a significant role in the purpose of God. Here is what is said of this horn: “And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them ” (verse 21).

Keep in mind, all of this is occurring under the sovereign rule of the God of heaven, for “the heavens do rule” (4:26). It is God who is “the Lord of kings” (2:47), even the ten that are associated with this fourth kingdom, and the spouting horn that will focus on troubling the saints of God.

I understand this to mean that a kingdom would spring out of this fourth kingdom – one that was different in some respects, yet the same in principle. Further, it would develop gradually, for a while allowing for the continuance of all ten of the kings among whom it had its beginning.

THREE HORNS PLUCKED UP

“ . . . before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots . . . ” Other versions read, “before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots,” NKJV “ and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it ,” NASB “ to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up by the roots ,” NRSV “ and three of the first horns were plucked up at the presence thereof ,” DOUAY “Three of the first horns were wrenched out, roots and all, to make room for it,” NLT and “ and three of the first horns have been eradicated from before it .” YLT

In order to make room for this “little horn,” three of the other horns were uprooted – i.e., they were uprooted by the development of this “little horn.”

It was the growth, or development of this little horn that caused the uprooting of three other horns. It would take the place they once occupied. This suggests the uprooting would not be by violence, or military action – something for which the fourth beast was particularly noted.

Thus we have in this “little horn” a different kind of king and kingdom, accomplishing its objectives in a different manner. Yet, it operates on the same principles of the kingdoms of this world, although it appears different from the other kingdoms.

THE HORN HAD THE EYES OF A MAN

“ . . . and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man . . . ” Other versions read, “in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man,” NKJV and “eyes like human eyes in this horn” NRSV

The four kingdoms introduced in this vision were noted for their beast-like qualities and behavior. They were ruthless, devouring, and forceful in their expansion. Crudeness characterized them all, as they implemented their rules by coercion, pounding their enemies into subjection.

Here, however, we have a new kind of power introduced. In many respects it is related to the ruthless kingdoms before it, yet it appears to be more human, being noted for its intelligence. It has “the eyes of a man.” I understand this to refer to a Satanic substitute for God , whose kingdom is depicted as a wheel within a wheel, moving without restriction throughout the world – wheels whose rims were “full of eyes all around” NIV (Ezek 1:15-18). Thus the Kingdom of God is seen as proceeding with purpose and objectivity, characterized by magnificent wisdom.

The “eyes of a man” in this “little horn” suggest an emulated objectivity , that is, a purpose which appears to be like that of God Himself. It represents corrupted intelligence and depraved

understanding. Yet, in the context of the world, it will appear impressive. This kingdom, which will come against the saints of God, will be noted for its shrewd, yet defiled, administration. In other words, rather than coercive power being the means it employs, deception, deceit, and misrepresentation will be employed to overcome men. This is confirmed in a further description of this “little horn.”

One further thing should be said about the phrase “the eyes of a man.” Over and above a comparison to the brutality of the “four beasts,” there is an analogy here of inferiority. That is, this king and kingdom will be inferior to the kingdom of God, with which it intends to compete. While it will take upon itself traits that are quite impressive, and will appear to be most successful in its objectives, it is more like man than it is like God, and therefore destined to fail.

THE HORN HAD A MOUTH SPEAKING GREAT THINGS

“. . . and a mouth speaking great things.” Other versions read, “and a mouth speaking pompous words,” NKJV “a mouth uttering great boasts,” NASB “a mouth speaking arrogantly,” NRSV “a mouth full of boasting,” NJB and “a mouth that was boasting arrogantly.” NLT

The “great things” spoken by this “little horn” are not good things. Later, Daniel will be told these “great words” would be spoken “against the Most High” (verse 25). The words, then, will actually be blasphemy, intended to overthrow the purpose of God and bring His people into bondage.

I understand this to be a religious power, that assumes the prerogatives of God, and even comes in the name of Christ. It represents Satan’s effort to overthrow the purpose of God, and defeat the saints of the Most High. The fact that such an extensive section of Scripture deals with this “little horn” shows how important it is that we obtain some grasp of its significance. It is mentioned again in verses 20-25, where the taking of its dominion is declared to be the time when the saints of God will take the kingdom.

This passage is no doubt the one to which Paul referred when he spoke of the rise of “the man of sin,” who would be associated with a great “falling away” (2 Thess 2:3). John the beloved may also had it in mind when he wrote, “you have heard that the Antichrist is coming” NKJV (1 John 2:18). It is also related to the a beast of the revelation given to John on Patmos, that was animated by the devil. That beast is also noted for his mouth: “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies” (Rev 13:5). Additionally, just as Daniel’s “little horn” was given to wear out the saints (7:25), so the beast of Revelation is said to “make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds” (Rev 13:7). There can be no question that Daniel and John are speaking of same foreboding events. Yet, both of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, take care to assure our hearts that God is in absolute control of the situation, and that the saints will ultimately triumph over it all.

I must reserve further comments on this “little horn” for our review of the verses that follow. The Lord unfolds this matter further to Daniel, providing additional details of both the nature and effectiveness of this deceptive power.

A WORD OF CAUTION

It is apparent that the passage before us is one that can awaken lifeless, and often damaging, human curiosity. It is also a text that has been subjected to all manner of human opinion and corruption. The net result of this has been that the text is often viewed as though it is beyond comprehension, or had no relevance for the people of God. I am going to suggest that those circumstances are themselves the result of the reign of the “little horn.”

One of the telling effects of religious delusion is the minimization of Scripture. When corruption in teaching takes place, the doctrines of men always upstage the Word of God. Human traditions are thus vaulted into prominence as the exceeding great and precious promises of God are pushed into the background of theological thought – if not eliminated altogether. This was precisely the circumstance that prevailed when Jesus entered into His ministry. Men were transgressing God’s commandments because of traditions, making them of “none effect” (Matt 15:3,6).

No person should imagine such a condition cannot occur in our day. We are, indeed, living in perilous times, when a person can maintain the identity of “Christian,” while wholly lacking the fruits thereof (2 Tim 3:1-5).

There are specific details given in this vision, as well as great Kingdom principles. None of them must be treated as though they were inconsequential, or unrelated to life in Christ. They all relate to the great salvation we enjoy in Christ Jesus. There is no such thing as an irrelevant word from the Living God! We must labor to take hold of the message being delivered by the Lord.

CONCLUSION

The extent of this vision confirms its importance. Daniel could not get it out of his mind, and we must not allow it to leave ours. In it the purpose of God is unfolded from the standpoint of its foes. We will behold how Satan seeks to undermine the purpose of the Lord, and how he will be completely frustrated in all of his efforts. God will unfold to Daniel the principle means by which Satan seeks to oppose the people of God. That revelation will be in perfect agreement with Apostolic insights and proclamations.

The importance of this vision is also seen in the fact that it unveils more of the very kingdoms introduced to us in the second chapter – in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great image. Something important enough to require extended revelation is important enough for extended meditation. We must not allow the message of this text to escape us!

THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD

All of the world's kingdoms have certain things in common.

- At their best, they are inferior to the Kingdom of God.
- They eventually oppose the God of heaven and His people.
- They tend to be ruthless, executing their own will at the expense of the well being of the people and the glory of God.
- They will all be swallowed up by the Kingdom of God, being terminated, and never able to rise again.

In view of these things, the worst of all social corruption is religion that functions according to the principles of worldly governments. This is particularly true in view of our Lord's words, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). While it is not popular to speak of this circumstance, it is imperative that we do so, alerting people to real conditions.

- The Lord Jesus is chosen us "out of the world" (John 15:9).
- God has given all believers to Jesus "out of the world" (John 17:6).
- Concerning Gentile nations (to which all of the beasts belonged), God is taking "out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14).
- In redemption, "we have received, NOT the spirit of the world" (1 Cor 2:12).
- God has "made foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor 1:20), bringing both its wisdom and its princes to nought, or nothing (1 Cor 2:8).
- At its finest, the wisdom of this world is "foolishness with God" (1 Cor 3:19).
- The "fashion of this world," even in its most illustrious and impressive appearance, is "passing away" (1 Cor 7:19).
- Satan himself is "the god of this world," working through its ways and manners, and blinding the hearts of men (2 Cor 4:4).
- The "course of this world," or its ways, enslave men to sin, and cause them to be dominated by the

devil (Eph 2:2-3).

- Wicked spiritual powers, operating under the auspices of the devil himself, rule the “darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12).
- The world in its totality, will be “condemned” by God. Salvation and chastening are both intended to extricate us from the world (1 Cor 11:32).
- Those who are united to Christ confess with Paul, “the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal 6:14).
- Jesus died to deliver us from “this present evil world,” according to the will of God (Gal 4:4).
- It is “the world to come” that is the focus of redemption, not this one (Heb 2:5).
- Whoever is a “friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).
- Salvation is nothing less than escaping “from the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet 1:4).
- All that is in the world, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are not of the Father” (1 John 2:16).
- The world “passes away, and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:17).
- In Christ, we become citizens of heaven, where our names are written (Phil 3:20-21; Heb 12:23). That circumstance makes us “strangers and foreigners in this world” (1 Pet 2:11).

These things point out the seriousness of alignment with this world – a condemned order. When the church takes to itself the manners of the world, it begins at once to drift away from God. The wrath of God begins to awaken against such people, and they are less inclined to seek mercy and find grace to help in the time of need.

What we will in the remainder of Daniel is the rise of corrupt religion – religion that is patterned after the world’s idea of organization and power. It will at once become apparent to you that we are living in a time when this approach dominates the Gentile church. That makes the passage all the more relevant to us. It is a compelling argument to separate from all such religion.

DANIEL'S VISION OF DIVINE JUDGMENT

Lesson #20

INTRODUCTION

Daniel has been given to see the rise of four great empires – global governments. The sight has been awesome, and hardly one that could be easily forgotten. How will the Lord proceed with His revelation to Daniel? How will He move Daniel to consider the kingdoms to which he has been introduced. The manner in which the Lord unfolds these things to His prophet is critical. In it we behold not only the Divine way of making truth known, but the great care that is taken to maintain proper Kingdom priorities.

One of the great weaknesses of contemporary religion is its proneness to lose Divine perspective. It is too easily drawn aside to political and social issues, and too inclined to passing fads. This tendency (which is heavily promoted) causes men to live so close to the earth that they become unaware of who governs the world, as well as their personal accountability to Him. This is why much that comes in the name of Christ actually speaks very little of Him or His Father. During the past few decades there has been a marked absence of Christo-centricity – Christ-centeredness. With this absence has come a devaluation of such books as Daniel and Revelation, to say nothing of doctrinal treatises like Romans, Hebrews, and the other Epistles. The purpose of God as made known in Scripture is scarcely known. Further, the considerations of man’s strict and inevitable accountability to God, and “eternal judgment” are subjects that are rarely expounded these days.

The effects of this have been staggering. There is a tidal wave of Scriptural ignorance that is sweeping over the professing church. We now have an entire Christian generation which, with few exceptions, is incapable of handling the Word of the God to whom they have been reconciled in Christ Jesus.

THE BEARING UPON OUR TEXT

Let it be clear that these observations are not mere theological contentions. The text before us provides an example of spiritual thinking – of the manner in which the Holy Spirit directs our minds. He will not allow us to linger long upon historical or future earthly events without bringing us to consider heavenly ones. Ponder what has been made known in Daniel’s vision thus far.

- Four winds of heaven strove upon the sea (7:2).
- Four great beasts came up from the sea, each one different from the other (7:3).
- The first beast was like a lion and had eagle’s wings (7:4a).
- The wings of the first beast were torn off (7:4b).
- The first beast was lifted up from the earth, made to stand like a man, and given a man’s heart (7:4c).
- A second beast rose out of the sea that was like a bear (7:5a).
- The second beast raised up on one side and had three ribs in its mouth (7:5b).
- A word was given to this beast to “Arise, devour much flesh” (7:5c).
- A third beast rose out of the sea that was like a leopard, having four wings of a fowl on its back, and four heads (7:6a).

- Dominion was given to this third beast (7:6b).
- A fourth beast rose out of the sea that was dreadful, terrible, and exceedingly strong (7:7a).
- This fourth beast had teeth of iron (7:7b).
- This beast devoured what he grasped, breaking in pieces, and pulverizing the residue with its feet (7:7c).
- This beast was different from all of the other beasts before it (7:7d).
- The fourth beast had ten horns.
- As Daniel pondered the ten horns, a little horn came up among them (7:8a).
- Three of the ten horns were pulled out by the roots to make room for the little horn (7:8b).
- The little horn had eyes like a man, and a mouth speaking great things (7:8c).

As you can see, the things that have been cited thus far tend to awaken human curiosity. Indeed, many a soul has read these things and forthwith been immersed in all manner of profitless research. With great care, the Spirit keeps us from going into meaningless bypaths. He has no sooner related this remarkable vision until He projects us forward to the end of time.

It is essential that we view these governments from the proper perspective. As great and impressive as they are, they are in strict subjection to the Kingdom of God – even though they are not aware of this circumstance. However, there is an appointed time when their subordination will become very apparent. Daniel is now shown that time – a time which precious view souls were given to see prior to the coming of Jesus Christ . It has to do with the consummation of the ages, and will assist us to properly consider the kings and kingdoms of this world.

It is essential to remember that the earth view is a blinding one. By contrast, the heavenly view is a clarifying and invigorating one. It has more of an appeal to faith and its manner of reasoning than to human rationality – and there is a vast difference between the two. This text will summon us to a higher way of thinking.

WHEN THRONES WILL BE CAST DOWN

“ 7:9a I beheld till the thrones were cast down . . . ” In a grand panoramic vision, the prophet is propelled beyond the time during which these four kingdoms – one at a time – would be prominent. Remember, these are Babylon, the Medo-Persians, Greece, and Rome. As great as they are from earth’s perspective, however, Daniel is to consider them from a higher point of view. They are temporal, and the time of their domination is wholly inconsequential as regards the Kingdom of God and eternity. The saints of God, or those who live by faith, are the real objects of Divine attention. All other will be thrown down, and their purposes utterly frustrated.

I BEHELD

“I beheld . . . ” Other versions read, “I watched,” NKJV “I kept looking,” NASB and “As I looked.”
NIV

Here the matter begins to unfold as Daniel watches the vision intently. He refuses to be turned from the vision, or to be occupied with other things. As Daniel gazed upon the scene, the whole picture began to change. Suddenly there was a shift from earth to heaven, and from the kings of this world to the King of heaven. Before any more is shown to Daniel of these four kingdoms and their exploits, he will be given to see afresh that “the heavens do rule” (Dan 4:26).

A Principle to Be Seen

There is a kingdom principle to be seen here. It is as we look intently into the truth, that insight is granted to us. No person grows in spiritual understanding who has a divided mind, or who does not concentrate on the things of God. A double minded person is “unstable in all of his ways” (James 1:8), and the Lord will not grant such a person to be a custodian of His truth. This is why Peter affirmed, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts ” (2 Pet 1:19).

This circumstance is precisely what prompted David to pray, “Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law” (Psa 119:18). These “wondrous things” are perceived as we look into, ponder, and meditate upon the Word of God. Even the holy angels desire to “look into” the glorious Gospel that is preached to the world (1 Pet 1:12).

There has never been a person with spiritual understanding who did not extend himself to think upon the Word of God. This accounts for the remarkable level of Scriptural ignorance that exists in our country. The Christian masses are not occupied with the Word of the Lord. They are not pondering it, meditating upon it, or looking into it. Further, multitudes of them are hearing sermons and lessons that

do not encourage them to do so. It is a most tragic situation, and should provoke lamentation in discerning hearts.

Daniel was not such a person, and neither should we be so identified. Daniel was given to behold high and lofty things that make for peace because he kept looking, kept beholding, and continued to consider.

This Is NOT Mere Precognition

It is vital to see this prophecy is not mere precognition – or God seeing what is going to happen on the earth. I use the word “precognition” because the Spirit applies the word “foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet 1:2) and “foreknow” (Rom 8:29) in a unique way. “Foreknowledge” is associated with God’s “determinate counsel” and “purpose.”

However, there remains a tendency in students of Scripture to see prophecies as God merely seeing what is going to happen, and declaring it. In order to subscribe to such a view, prophecy must erroneously be divided into two categories.

- First , there are matters God declares He will cause to happen. On the side of calamity, there are the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. On the side of blessing, there is a nation springing from Abraham (Gen 12:2), the birth of the Savior (Gen 3:15; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7), the making of a New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34), and the second coming of Jesus (Heb 9:28). These events, the calamities and the blessings, are generally perceived as wholly the working of the Lord – the Lord affirming what He Himself was going to do. That is, indeed, altogether true. No thinking person will affirm these things happened independently of Divine intervention.
- Second , it is thought there are things that occur upon the earth independent of the government of God. These fall into categories such as “natural disasters,” political upheavals, the spread of iniquity, and apostasy from the Lord. Scriptural statements concerning the rise of such things are thus viewed as God seeing they were going to happen, and inspiring men to write of them.

A Wholly Improper View

This view is wholly improper. God has spoken to the issue of things that occur upon the earth, emphatically declaring they do not occur independently of Him . “The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these” NASB (Isa 45:7). The appearance of Pharaoh the despot is said to be the result of God’s work (Ex 9:16). The success of Nebuchadnezzar is credited to the working of the Lord (Dan 2:37). The tragedies that occurred to Job were all under the direct administration of God (Job 1-2). God is said to harden hearts (Ex 10:1; Deut 2:30), raise up adversaries against a certain king (1 Kgs 11:14,23), call for a famine (2 Kgs 8:1; Psa 105:16), and have His way “in the whirlwind and in the storm” (Nah 1:3).

Additionally, the Lord is “the Governor among the nations” (Psa 22:28), and “His kingdom ruleth over all” (Psa 103:19). He is “a great King over all the earth” (Psa 47:2), and “the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa 6:3).

There Is No Question

There is no question about Who is ruling this world. God has made clear that He, and He alone, can change both times and seasons. It is He who removes kings and sets them up (Dan 2:21). The difficulty for the flesh is this: “how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?” (Rom 11:33-35). The fact that men cannot decipher the ways and judgments of God is certainly no justification for saying things occurring on the earth are independent of His government.

A Fitting Conclusion

The Spirit’s fitting conclusion to the above affirmation is this: “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:36). Confirming the accuracy and power of this verse, other versions read, “ Everything there is comes from Him and is caused by Him and exists for Him. To Him be glory for ever! Amen,” NJB “For everything comes from Him ; everything exists by His power and is intended for His glory . To Him be glory evermore. Amen,” NLT and “. . . For all things originate with Him , and come from Him ; all things live through Him , and all things center in and tend to consummate and to end in Him . To Him be glory forever! Amen – so be it!”
AMPLIFIED NEW TESTAMENT

I understand this introduces all manner of difficulties for the human intellect. However, it presents no problem for faith! These are Divine affirmations, and they are to be believed. It is ever true that Divine power is realized through affirmation , not human explanation or carnal understanding.

The vision we will now consider takes us beyond casual interest. It moves us into an arena of thought that will demand all of our attention, and all of our ransomed powers. It is lofty, yet powerful. It is profound, yet practical. Here is a heavenly balm to sooth the heart troubled by the rise of beastly and consuming empires.

TILL THRONES

“ . . . till the thrones were cast down .” Other versions read, “till thrones were put in place ,” NKJV “until thrones were set up ,” NASB “thrones were set in place ,” NIV and “till that thrones have been thrown down .” YLT

As you can see, there appears to be a significant difference in the various translations of this text. One view has thrones being cast down , the other has them being put in place , or established. This condition exists because the word translated “cast down” (remah) can mean to “put in place” as well

as to “cast down.” Most later versions favor the latter reading: “put in place,” “set up,” “set in place,” etc.

At this point, we should not favor the language experts, although that may seem to be a wise course. The Hebrew word in this text is employed by Daniel ten other times – or more precisely, is used by the Holy Spirit in Daniel. The texts are as follows. I have underlined the translation of the word.

- “And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace”. (Dan 3:6 and 11)
- “Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” (Dan 3:15)
- “And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.” (Dan 3:20)
- “Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.” (Dan 3:21)
- “Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counselors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.” (Dan 3:24)
- “All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.” (Dan 6:7)
- “Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.” (Dan 6:12)
- “Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.” (Dan 6:16)
- “And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.” (Dan 6:24)

There is no question in any of these texts of the meaning of the word “cast” or “throw.” It certainly is not used in these texts to mean someone was established or set in place. Rather, it is a term of judgment that involved the denunciation and overthrow of the individuals in question. The first were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego , the second Daniel , and the third those who charged Daniel, together with their families .

Yet, even though, up to this point, the Spirit has consistently used this word to depict an overthrow, some have chosen to believe here He uses the word to signify the setting up of thrones. In my judgment, there is no sound basis for such a conclusion. We need more than a lexical definition of a word to derive the meaning of Scripture.

Thrown Down

Using the meaning “thrown down,” or “cast down,” the “thrones” are the four empires that have been described under the figure of four beasts. They stand for all earthly governments, for they are earthly power in its loftiest and most extensive form. The text, in this case, declares Daniel kept looking intently at the vision until all earthly powers were deposed. This would equate with all of Christ’s enemies becoming His “footstool” (Heb 10:13), or the kingdoms of this world becoming “the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ” (Rev 11:15).

In Apostolic language, this would be the time to which the Spirit refers in First Corinthians 15:24. “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” No more beastly powers. No more ruthless authority. Never again will one kingdom yield to another, or one kingdom overcome another. This, I believe, is the time to which this text refers.

Set In Place

If one chooses the representation of thrones as being “set in place,” here is the meaning. These thrones belong to the saints of the Most High God, to whom the Kingdom will be given (verses 17, 22, and 25). In this case, the reference is to the time when the saints “judge the world” and “angels” (1 Cor 6:1-2) , “inherit the earth” (Matt 5:8), and “reign with Christ” (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 22:2).

Not A Significant Difference

While it may appear on the surface that this is a significant difference, it really is not. By “significant,” I mean this is not a point that should issue in contention or endless controversy . Both of these – the casting down of earthly thrones, and the setting up of thrones for saints – take place at the same time. In fact, the dissolving of all worldly power is in order that the saints may “take the Kingdom,” possessing it “for ever and ever” (7:22).

A Contrast Is Seen

There is a remarkable contrast seen in this text. The first ten uses of the word translated “cast down” applied to human judgment. The first nine times represented the thorough frustration of political power. The three children of Judah were “cast” into the fiery furnace, but realized no harm whatsoever. They were delivered without any evidence on their persons or clothing they had ever been in that furnace. Daniel was “cast” into the lion’s den, but was also delivered without a solitary indication on his person or clothing that he spent the night with lions. The highest government, and most authoritative persons in the world, could not finalize their judgment against the servants of God. The only case where their judgment prevailed was when the accusers of Daniel were cast into the lions’ den, with their wives and children. That judgment, however, was a reversal of the king’s former decree, and the result of Daniel’s deliverance.

Now, however, a kind of judgment is introduced that cannot be controverted. Here is an authority that is superior to the world’s most influential and seemingly successful power. The thrones of our text are “cast down,” never to rise again!

If someone still prefers to think of these thrones as being set up, the essential meaning remains the same. They are set up, never to be removed.

THE POINT

As we will see, however, the real point is not the thrones, but the One whose judgment will now be revealed. Our attention will now be turned to the Lord of glory. The Spirit will not allow our thoughts to be dominated by the rise and prominence of beastly powers. Or worldly empires. He will quickly move us to the consummation of the ages, and the time of judgment. Our hearts will now be turned to the Lord and His prevailing power.

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS – HIS PERSON

“ 7:9b . . . and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool . . . ”

Our consideration is now lifted from four wild and ruthless beasts that rose up and fell, to One who has continued – “the Ancient of days.” Our attention is being shifted from the temporal to the

eternal, from the transitory to the everlasting. It is in His “light” that we will “see light” (Psa 36:9). That is, things that had to be illuminated by Him will now be made more clear by a consideration of His Person .

The “knowledge of God” is like a key that unlocks great mysteries, enabling us to see them correctly. In this case, seeing correctly is not being intimidated or disheartened by the appearance of these four beastly empires. The sight of them is not to induce fear in our hearts, or cause us to be like those of whom Jesus said, “Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth : for the powers of heaven shall be shaken” (Luke 21:26).

Such fears cannot be allayed by intellectual explanations. Human reason cannot effectively counteract the dominance of fear , even though men continually attempt this method. The ONLY effective way to still the troubled heart is to stand by faith in the presence of the Lord. It is only when we behold Him who is “above all” (Eph 4:6) that the heart is calmed, and the mind is stabilized. It is no wonder that it is written, “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace” (Job 22:21). A person whose mind is not “stayed on” the Lord (Isa 26:3) cannot be at peace – particularly when governments and events of the magnitude of the first part of our text are declared.

Revelations of God

There have been a few godly men who have been granted visions of God. They are not many, and the visions were few. In each one of them, the vision was majestic. A sense of the absolute dominance of God registered strongly upon all who were granted such visions.

- Micaiah the prophet is the first to say “I saw the Lord.” He saw Him surrounded by a vast host of personalities. “And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: **I saw the LORD** sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left” (1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chron 18:18).
- Isaiah had an extended vision of God in which heavenly activities were seen. “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke” (Isa 6:1-4).
- Amos the prophet saw the Lord in relation to the altar, ready to judge His people. “ **I saw the Lord** standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered” (Amos 9:1).
- Ezekiel had “visions of God” that were detailed, and characterized by great awe. This prophet recorded

one of those remarkable visions. “And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning. Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel. When they went, they went upon their four sides: and they turned not when they went. As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four. And when the living creatures went, the wheels went by them: and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; and the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. And the likeness of the firmament upon the heads of the living creature was as the color of the terrible crystal, stretched forth over their heads above. And under the firmament were their wings straight, the one toward the other: every one had two, which covered on this side, and every one had two, which covered on that side, their bodies. And when they went, I heard the noise of their wings, like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty, the voice of speech, as the noise of an host: when they stood, they let down their wings. And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads, when they stood, and had let down their wings. And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake” (Ezek 1:4-28).

- The Apostle John was also granted to see into the holiest place. “And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Rev 4:2-8).

A Thought

Can you imagine any of these favored men standing in the glory of these revelations and referring to God as “Daddy,” “Friend,” or “the Man upstairs?” Can you picture them beholding the Lord of glory as One upon whose lap they could comfortably sit? Can you see them gawking about with disinterest, or holding some casual conversation with one of the holy angels?

Indeed, such a thought taxes the intelligence and patience of any sober person. There is nothing in any of these visions that was conducive to being casual. They did not promote worldly interests or concerns. People became keenly aware of their own frailty. Isaiah cried out “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa 6:5). Ezekiel said, “I fell upon my face” (Ezek 1:28). Daniel, after confronting the Lord, said “there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength” (Dan 10:8). John , after beholding Divine glory, said, “I fell at His feet as a dead man” (Rev 1:17).

An Application

A casual religious atmosphere is one in which the Lord is not perceived. A soul that entertains no interest for the things of God is one that does not know the Lord, and is not aware of His presence. No one, while being acutely aware of the Lord’s presence and glory, has any thought about other things. In the glow of glory no one has ever spoken glibly about God, or viewed what He said as inconsequential. Such people have never been unduly concerned about earthly powers, and were acutely aware of their own shortcomings. Those are just the facts in the case, and they are beyond all dispute.

The great curse of our time, and especially in our Western culture, is the near-total indifference toward the God of heaven. There is too much love of the world, fear of man, and disinterest in the Word of God. Theological views are developed and hawked that promote distorted views of the Lord. Those who buy these views are prone to excuse sin, feel comfortable in being at a distance from the Lord, and more tolerant of gross corruptions of the truth of God. In such a society Daniel would be wholly out of place. He would have nothing to do with it, and it would have nothing to do with Him.

With all of the professed Christianity about us, people simply are not conscious of God. This is confirmed by the way they live, speak, dress, and work. Their preferences reveal it. Their approach to the Scripture reveals it. Their ignorance of God attests to it.

All of this is intended to confirm that the modern church sorely needs to acquaint itself with God (Job 22:21).

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

“ . . . and the Ancient of days . . . ” Other versions read “Ancient One,” NRSV “a very old man,” BBE “a most venerable,” NJB From the standpoint of language definition (which is the weakest of all

approaches to Scripture), the word translated “ancient” means “ancient, advanced, or old,” STRONGS and “days” refers to a twenty-four hour period. STRONGS The technical meaning of the expression is “he who is most ancient as to days,” and is equivalent to the English expression “The Eternal.” BARNES

Only Daniel uses this expression – and he uses it three times – all in this chapter.

- “The Ancient of days did sit” (v 9).
- “The Son of man . . . came to the Ancient of days.” (v 13).
- “Until the Ancient of days came” (v 22).

This Is A Reference to God

The picture is that of judgment about to be ministered by One who is wise and seasoned. The reference is to the Lord God – “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 11:31). This is the only place in Scripture where the Mighty God of heaven is represented by a human form. It seems to me that a comparison is being made with wild beasts, some of which had human characteristics – some aspects of wisdom, but extremely limited – with the eternal God, who is altogether wise, stable, and consistent.

A Contrast With Man

Additionally, the language contrasts God with man whose “days are as grass” (Psa 103:15). Of men – even the best and most noble of them – it is said, “his days are as a shadow that passeth away” (Psa 144:4). But as for the Living God, He is “the Ancient of days,” who is “from everlasting” (Psa 93:2; Hab 1:12). There is also the matter of veneration and respect depicted in this imagery.

An Accommodation to Human Frailty

One further thing to consider is this. No man can see God in all of His effulgence and live (Ex 33:20). There is such a sharp contrast between God and man, and such an overpowering glory found in Him, that He must accommodate Himself to man’s frailty in order for men to survive an encounter with Him. Thus He hid Moses in a cleft of the rock and placed His hand over him while He passed before him. Only after He had passed did He remove His hand, allowing Moses to see the afterglow of His magnificent glory (Ex 33:21-23). In view of this perspective, the vision of God in a human form is actually an accommodation to the frailty of Daniel. Were it not for this gracious consideration of the Lord, Daniel would have seen nothing of God at all. Or, if he had seen Him, Daniel would have been consumed by His glory.

Distinguished From the Son of Man

By referring to God as the “Ancient of days,” He is also distinguished from “the Son of man,” who will be introduced later (7:13). We must remember that “the Head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3). This headship is the consequence of the Word become flesh – a price Jesus willingly paid to redeem us from all iniquity. He did not consider Himself deprived, or “counted it not robbery,” in this arrangement (Phil 2:6).

DID SIT

“ . . . did sit . . . ” Here the Lord is depicted as sitting to judge. It is to be understood that He sits upon the ultimate and dominant throne, which, it is declared, “He has prepared for judgment” (Psa 9:7). It is also affirmed that “justice and judgment are the habitation” of His throne, being integral to it. Again, it is declared that “righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne” (Psa 97:2). The fact that the Lord “did sit” indicates His judgment was forthcoming.

This means it is God’s nature to judge, and His judgment is unavoidable. Now, after we have seen the governments of the world ruling and judging, we will be exposed to the One who judges them. He gave them their power, and they are strictly accountable to Him. He will not leave us pondering their ruthlessness, but will bring us to consider the fact of their judgment. Because God is “the Ancient of days,” His judgment will be wise and just. For the same reason, it will also be final and irreversible.

After the Thrones Were Cast Down

It is of significance that the God of heaven appears in the vision after “the thrones were cast down.” Rather than this climactic overthrow affecting God, He is the One who caused the thrones to be dashed to the ground. He remained unchanged by the whole matter.

HIS GARMENT WAS WHILE AS SNOW

“ . . . whose garment was white as snow . . . ” This is not a casual garment, but one depicting the majestic rule of the God of heaven. In the tabernacle service, the priest wore a “robe” when executing his office (Ex 28:4; Lev 8:7). When the ark of the covenant was returned to its place, David accompanied it in his kingly capacity, being “clothed with a robe of fine linen” (1 Chron 5:27). The king of Nineveh wore a robe, which he removed when calling for repentance before the Lord (Jonah 3:6).

A “garment” as “white as snow” depicts impeccable holiness and purity. To be more specific, it declares God is pure and holy in all of His judgments . None of His judgments are tainted with impurity, injustice, haste, or foolishness. As it is written, “the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether” (Psa 19:9). None can say to Him, “What have You done?” (Dan 4:35), question His judgments, or complain because of them.

HIS HAIR WAS LIKE PURE WOOL

“ . . . and the hair of His head like the pure wool . . . ” This is another depiction of the purity and holiness of God. Here His thoughts and motives are emphasized, as compared with His judgments and deeds, which were denoted by a “garment.” His thoughts are “very deep,” challenging the limited capacities of men (Psa 92:5). Because of their purity, they are also “precious” to those who love Him (Psa 139:17). Because of this circumstance, God’s “words,” which are the communication of His thoughts, “are pure words” (Psa 12:6).

Whether we are considering the ways of the Lord, the manner in which He judges, His thoughts, or His words, “there is no unrighteousness with Him” (Psa 92:15). Everything He says and does is absolutely right, and His intentions are wholly good and just. There was unrighteousness with the beasts Daniel saw, but there is none with God. Therefore, He is the Judge – “the Judge of all the earth” (Gen 18:25).

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS – HIS THRONE

“ 7:9c His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.”

Here is where the God of heaven and earth was seated – “His throne.” As we might suppose, the vision is majestic and awe-inspiring. However, this is not a mere literary device, or play upon words. His glory is so magnificent “the whole earth” can be “filled” with it – and there still be sufficient to “cover the heavens” as well (Num 14:21; Psa 72:19; Isa 6:3; Hab 3:3). The purpose of this vision is not to precisely define the appearance of the Lord. Rather, it is to instill in our hearts an awareness of the greatness of God – something that easily eludes those living in an age of cheap and meaningless distractions.

There is a basic postulate in Scripture that is worthy of our consideration. If the Lord can get and keep our attention, He will also have our hearts. That is precisely why He can say, “ Look unto Me , and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isa 45:22). When we can confess with Jehoshaphat, “our eyes are upon Thee” (2 Chron 20:12), a blessing is on the way!

This text is assisting us to focus upon the Lord. It is helping us to consider His ways. It gently and effectively brings us away from being intimidated by the beastly powers of the earth, thereby promoting the cleansing fear of the Lord.

HIS THRONE

The throne of God is repeatedly referenced in the Word of God. It speaks of the Sovereignty, or

uncontested and effective reign, of the Living God. It is a very real throne, although it is depicted in imagery here in order to assist our understanding.

- Micaiah the prophet “saw the Lord sitting on His throne” (1 Kgs 22:19).
- Isaiah saw the Lord “sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up” (Isa 6:1).
- John the beloved saw the Lord “sitting upon His throne,” surrounded by glory, splendor, and life (Rev 4:2-4). He also saw this throne and He that was upon it, readied for judgment (Rev 20:11).
- God’s throne is said to be “prepared for judgment” (Psa 9:7).
- “Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne” (Psa 97:2).
- He has prepared His throne “in the heavens,” high above the restrictions of this world (Psa 103:19).
- It is written, “the Lord’s throne is in heaven” (Psa 11:4).
- Jesus is presently seated with God “in His throne” (Rev 3:21).
- When Jesus ascended, it was to “God, and to His throne” (Rev 12:5).
- The throne of the Lord, or His unchallenged dominion, is “from generation to generation” (Lam 5:19).
- There is a “throne of iniquity,” and Satan has a “throne” as well, but they are subservient to the throne of God (Psa 94:20; Rev 2:13; Mic 7:19)
- His throne “is for ever and ever” (Psa 45:6).
- “Justice and judgment are the habitation” of His throne (Psa 89:14).
- His throne was “established of old,” and is everlasting as He is (Psa 93:2).
- God’s throne is a “throne of holiness” (Psa 47:8).

The book of Revelation, which is a declaration of the reign of the Lord, mentions the throne of God thirty-nine times, consistently associating it with the Lord Jesus, upon whose shoulder the government has been placed (Rev 1:4; 3:21; 4:2,3,4,5,6,9,10; 5:1,6,7,11,13; 6:16; 7:9,10,11,15,17; 8:3; 12:5; 14:3,5; 16:7; 19:4,5; 20:11; 21:5; 22:1,3). It is consistently represented as the place of government, and

the center-point of praise. The whole world is governed from this throne.

When, therefore, we are confronted with the throne of God, we are immediately brought to consider His rule, dominion, and absolute government. We are not speaking of mere legality, but of Divine power, which is mingled with righteousness and truth.

After showing us the rise of global governments, the Spirit is assisting us to adjust our spiritual vision. We must not allow our perspective of things to be blurred by the consideration of the powers of this world. Everything must be seen within the framework of Divine power, not the power and influence of the wicked one and those through whom he, under Divine control, can work!

Something to Consider

Here, we must come to grips with misconceptions of the final days of the earth. It is true that they will involve “perilous times,” “wars and rumors of wars,” and all manner of spreading wickedness. Nevertheless, the days are controlled by God, not the devil – and much less not by man. When speaking of a time of great social and political upheaval, Jesus said, “For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be” (Mark 13:19). He continued by saying if those days were not cut short, “no flesh should be saved.” Then, in a burst of heavenly light He affirmed, “but for the elect's sake, whom He hath chosen, HE HATH SHORTENED THE DAYS” (Mark 13:20). The Lord is in control, and governs this world with His people in mind.

Thus, before proceeding further with an explanation of the world's ruthless empires, the Lord turns our attention to the throne from which the world is governed. If men are impressed by the beastly representations of the world's governments, the throne of God will prove to be infinitely more impressive. This is the throne from which the governments received their power. And, this is the throne that will dictate their demise. Praise the Lord!

LIKE THE FIERY FLAME

“His throne was like the fiery flame . . .” Other versions read, “His throne was ablaze with flames,” NASB “His throne was flaming with fire,” NIV “His throne was fiery flames,” NRSV “He sat on a fiery throne,” NLT and “His throne was tongues of flame.” TNK

What an awesome sight! Here is one that sits upon what consumes everything and everyone else. This is the God who strictly controls that which destroys. It has no power over Him, but He has the power over it. No sane person chooses to step into the fiery flames, but the Lord's throne – where He sits – is ablaze with flames. It is not a smoldering fire, like a “smoking flax,” but a flaming inferno. The throne was bright, glowing, and flashing with flames. Nothing about this throne was static, inactive, or dormant. It was magnificent, like a great and large mass of flame.

Lest we be tempted to be casual in our views of the Lord, He is consistently associated with fire – fire that can destroy, reveal, or lead.

- God rained fire on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24).
- God spoke to Moses out of fire that burned in a bush, yet did not consume it (Ex 3:2).
- He led Israel by a pillar of fire by night (Ex 13:21-22).
- When God descended on Mount Sinai, He did so “in fire ” (Ex 19:18).
- The sight of the Lord upon Mount Sinai was like “a devouring fire ” (Ex 24:17).
- At the presence of the Lord, Mount Sinai “burned with fire ” (Deut 4:11).
- At Sinai God spoke “out of the midst of the fire ” (Deut 4:12,15).
- God Himself “is a consuming fire ” (Deut 4:24; Heb 12:29).
- God called the fire at Sinai “His great fire ”(Deut 4:36).
- At Sinai the people “were afraid by reason of the fire ” (Deut 5:5).
- God said He would destroy the enemies of Israel “as a consuming fire ” (Deut 9:3).
- The wrath of God burns “like fire ” (Psa 89:46).
- It is written, “A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about” (Psa 97:3).

The Point of This Imagery

The point of this imagery is this: wherever there is conflict with God, there will be an inevitable confrontation . That confrontation will result in the overthrow of all competitive influence. Those who imagine they can make war with God are fools in the most despicable sense of the word. Compared to God, man in his most powerful state – like Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Cyrus, Alexander, and the Caesars – sit upon straw thrones. When God moves against such foes, regardless of their degree of power, they are instantly destroyed, “and that without remedy” (Prov 6:15).

Let it be clear in our minds. It simply is not possible to survive confronting an angry God! That is the reason for justification from sin, the interceding Christ, and the abundance of grace. These all cause God's favor to be toward us instead of His wrath. I do not believe this perspective has been made clear to our generation. It seems to me that very little association is made these days, of a God with a throne that is flaming with fire. But that is the reality of the matter, and those who see it will flee "for refuge to lay hold on the hope that is set before us" (Heb 6:18).

Like it or not, it is God's nature to consume those who are not like Himself. That, of course, is why He has predestinated that those He has foreknown be "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom 8:29). That is why the Holy Spirit is presently changing us from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor 3:18). That is why, when we see the Lord Jesus as He is, we will "be like Him" (1 John 3:1-3). No one else will be able to survive facing the God of heaven, whose throne "is like the fiery fame."

WHEELS AS BURNING FIRE

". . . and his wheels as burning fire." Other versions read, "Its wheels a burning fire," NKJV "its wheels were all ablaze," NIV and "with wheels of blazing fire." NLT

A Mobile Throne

Here is a mobile throne – a throne with wheels . The Psalmist pictured the Lord as moving about, exercising His will whenever He pleased. He said the Lord "who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind" (Psa 104:3) – Divine mobility!

Ezekiel's Vision of God

The prophet Ezekiel saw God in a similar way. He testified that while he was among the Babylonian captives, "the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (Ezek 1:1). There, in the heathen "land of the Chaldeans," the word of God came "expressly" to him (1:3).

He saw a great whirlwind come out of the North. Within that tempest he saw "a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it, and in its midst something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire" NASB (Ezek 1:4). Four heavenly personages were within this fire, each one moving straightforward "wherever the Spirit was about to go" NASB (1:5-12). In a vivid depiction of the execution of the will of God, Ezekiel saw "The appearance of the living creatures was like burning coals of fire or like torches. Fire moved back and forth among the creatures: it was bright, and lightning flashed out of it. The creatures sped back and forth like flashes of lightning" NIV (1:14).

In this marvelous picture of Divine mobility, Ezekiel also saw "wheels." Each living creature was by a wheel. The prophet describes the wheels in a unique way. "The appearance of the wheels and their

workings was like the color of beryl, and all four had the same likeness. The appearance of their workings was, as it were, a wheel in the middle of a wheel . When they moved, they went toward any one of four directions ; they did not turn aside when they went” (1:16-17). The movement was a purposeful, or intelligent, movement, as depicted by the rims of the wheels being “full of eyes” (1:18). Without any restriction whatsoever, “Wherever the spirit wanted to go, they went, because there the spirit went” (1:20).

In the throne-visions of both Daniel and Ezekiel, there is an animated presentation of the truth that is elsewhere declared doctrinally – namely that the Lord rules over all and according to His own will.

- “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?” (Dan 4:35)
- “But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth .” (Job 23:13)
- “The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect . The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations.” (Psa 33:10-11)
- “But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased .” (Psa 115:3)
- “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in heaven, and in earth , in the seas, and all deep places.” (Psa 135:6)
- “For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it ? _ and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back ?” (Isa 14:27)
- “Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure .” (Isa 46:9-10)
- “For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever Thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done .” (Acts 4:27-28).
- “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will .” (Eph 1:11)

Thus the throne of the Almighty is pictured as moving without restriction wherever He pleases.

His rule is unfettered and unhindered. If He desires to raise up Pharaoh, He does. When He is finished with him, He lords him down. If He desires to give the kingdoms of the world to Nebuchadnezzar, He does. If He decides to deprive that very king of his mind, and drive him among the beasts of the field, that is what He does. When He wants to dethrone Belshazzar, giving the kingdom of Babylon to the Medes and the Persians, He does so – in a single night. That is the God who saves and keeps us!

I ask you, what are four beastly governments to compare with that? How significant can ten horns on a ruthless beast be in view of this? And who will tremble before a prideful and boasting “little horn” in view of such an formidable God? See, the Spirit is confirming to our hearts that God is the One to fear, not man. It is His kingdom that is invincible, not those of men.

If you wish to establish a finely tuned theological system, this will not sound good. It requires faith more than human understanding. In fact, it IS disruptive of a significant amount of systematized theology. However, if you are in a strange land like Daniel, a heathen is upon the throne, and the prospect of future violence looms before you, this sounds mighty good! It will sound good to you also when you see this world as it is.

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS – HIS INTRUSION

“10a A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him . . .” What a picture we have before us! Not only is a wise God sitting upon the throne, that throne is moving about wherever the Lord pleases. He is fulfilling His will among the heathen as well as the Israelites and children of Judah. If the throne rolls into Judah and against Jerusalem, it prevails. If it rolls into Babylon, it conquers. If it comes against the Medes and the Persians, it unquestionably dominates. If it rolls up against Greece, the nation topples. If it comes against the seemingly invincible government of Rome, that government will fall.

Knowing the difficulties associated with seeing these things, the Spirit continues. A “fiery stream” is not seen “coming forth from before Him.” Other versions read, “A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him,” NASB “A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence,” NRSV “A stream of fire rushed forth before him,” Septuagint “A stream of fire poured out, issuing from his presence,” NJB and “A flood of fire is proceeding and coming forth from before Him.” YLT

Here is another graphic picture of the unhindered movement of the Mighty God. This is the language of judgment, which no opponent will survive. The Psalmist said the same thing this way, “Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him” (Psa 50:3). Again he wrote, “A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up

His enemies round about” (Psa 97:3). Again it is written, “and fire out of his mouth devoured ” (Psa 18:8). Malachi also painted a vivid picture of this aspect of the Divine character. “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven ; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble : and the day that cometh shall burn them up , saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch” (Mal 4:1).

I understand that it is not fashionable to speak of the Lord in this manner in a day marked by carnality and compromise. But if ever there was time in which this must be declared, it is in our time. That declaration is not only to warn the unruly, and rebuke the ungodly. It is also to comfort the people who “sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst” (Ezek 9:4). There are people who are being deprived of their native spiritual habitation, like Daniel was deprived of Jerusalem. There are others, who like Daniel, are in a desolate place, where the ungodly outnumber the godly, and the soul is made to feel like a “pelican in the wilderness, and an owl in the desert” (Psa 102:6).

There are broken-hearted preachers and teachers, who long for an audience who will take in the Word of the Lord – like Daniel among the Chaldeans, who cared little or nothing for the Word of the Lord. Just as Daniel could be forgotten for years in Babylon, so there are many faithful servants of God who must go outside of the professed church to nourish their souls, and look about in the highways and byways of life to find those hungering and thirsting for righteousness. What do we say to afflicted souls like these? What message can we give them that will be an elixir to their wearied soul?

I will tell you what we will say. We will tell them of an Omnipotent God who moves when He wills, and will do so in the behalf of His people. His throne is like a devouring fire, against which no enemy has so much as a single moment of power.

God intrudes into the affairs of men , and when He does, a river of consuming fire goes before Him, removing hindering stubble, and clearing the land of defilement. Before Him goes something like a great fiery lava flow, against which men in their most powerful and influential state are impotent.

When God came to deliver Israel from Egypt, a path of devastation preceded Him in the plagues. When God saw the wickedness of the world in Noah’s day, a path of destruction was created in the flood. The same happened at the tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the seven nations that occupied Canaan.

When God brought salvation through Jesus Christ, a wave of destruction preceded Him. The devil was destroyed (Heb 2:14), principalities and powers were plundered (Col 2:15), the condemning Law and the debt it created were taken out of the way (Col 2:14), and the sins of the world were put away (Heb 9:26).

The only place a “fiery stream” does not consume before the Lord is where faith is found, and hostility against the Lord is not found. Such souls have nothing to fear from this fiery stream.

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS – HIS CENTRALITY

“ 10b . . . thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him . . . ”

As the vision unfolds, you sense the One sitting upon the throne is the center of attention and all activity. While the governments of the world were characterized as beasts of the earth, the throne of God is surrounded by intelligent and serving spirits. Here there are a vast host of inquiring and ministering spirits. Everyone of them is devoted to the God who sits upon the throne – committed to do His bidding.

A VAST HOST

“ 10b . . . thousand thousands . . . and ten thousand times ten thousand . . . ” Other versions read, “Thousands upon thousands” NASB and “Millions of angels.” NLT

The multitude of these heavenly hosts is staggering. The counts here are not intended to be mathematically precise. They rather reflect for us a perspective of the grandeur of the world to come. Here, in this world, the servants of God are here and there. There have been times in the history of the world when the number of known saints were in the single digits – like in the days of Enoch, Noah, Job, and when Abraham was called. Historically, even during times when truth was unusually influential, the greater percentage of the people have not believed. Even then, the number of diligent souls who waited continually upon the Lord was only a small percentage of those who claimed identity with Him.

But this is not the way it is around the throne of God. There is no one there who is “slow of heart” (Lk 24:25). There are none who draw back, are dull of hearing, or run and hide from God. When you hear Jesus teach us to pray, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Mat 6:10), think of this majestic scene.

A Frequent Reference

The Scriptures frequently speak of the multitude of personalities around the Lord.

- Micaiah’s vision. “I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left” (1 Kgs 22:19).

- David spoke of them. “Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts ; ye ministers of His, that do His pleasure” (Psa 103:21).
- John saw them his Patmos vision. “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands ” (Rev 5:11).
- Enoch spoke of them. “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints ” (Jude 1:14).

It is no wonder the phrase “Lord of hosts” occurs two hundred and forty -five times in Scripture! Nine times we read, “the LORD of hosts is His name” (Isa 47:4; 48:2; 51:15; 54:5; Jer 10:16; 31:35; 32:18; 50:34; 51:19).

MINISTERED UNTO HIM

“ . . . ministered unto him. . . ” Other versions read, “were attending Him,” NASB and “attended Him.” NLT

And what do these hosts do? It is written that they “minister unto Him.” That is, they serve Him, doing His bidding . In using the word “attending,” other versions emphasize these hosts are there for the solitary purpose of doing the Lord’s bidding.

Angels are called God’s “ministers.” “And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire” (Heb 1:7; Psa 104:4). As a “flame of fire,” they instantly do the bidding of the Lord, flying “swiftly” (Dan 9:21) to fulfill their commissions. David speaks of them as doing God’s commandments and hearkening unto His word (Psa 103:20). Ezekiel saw “living creatures” around the throne of God who “ran and returned as a flash of lightning” (Ezek 1:13). They were ministering to the Lord, doing “His commandments and hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Psa 103:20).

These holy angels are carrying out the judgments of the Lord. Determinations are made by God Almighty, then these heavenly hosts are dispatched to carry them out. Thus God “sent an angel” to bring Israel out of Egypt (Num 20:16). He also “sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it” (1 Chron 21:15). Again, He “sent an angel which cut off all the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria” (2 Chr 32:21). Another was sent to deliver Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego from the furnace (Dan 3:28), and another to deliver Daniel from the lion’s den (Dan 6:22). Angel’s were sent to Zechariah and Mary, to announce the miraculous births of John the Baptist and Jesus (Luke 1:19,26).

Jesus spoke of His Father being able to send “twelve legions of angels,” who would thwart any attempt of the world to arrest Him or do Him harm (Matt 26:53). Authorities say a “legion ”was 6,200 footmen and 300 horsemen. That would make “twelve legions” about 78,000 angels. Considering what one angel has been known to do (2 Kgs 19:35), it is staggering to consider what 78,000 of them could do. At any rate, had God sent them, they would have come out from this vast throng Daniel saw, who stood before the throne, waiting for an assignment. What faithful ministers these are, always doing the bidding of God instantly and thoroughly.

It is good when the redeemed join this amalgamation of holy spirits, themselves ministering unto the Lord. When the Holy Spirit separated Barnabas and Saul to a special work, He did so while the church “ministered to the Lord” (Acts 13:2). At that time, those saints were in fellowship with the “innumerable company of angels” who continually minister to the Lord (Heb 12:22).

STOOD BEFORE HIM

“ . . . and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him . . . ” Other versions read, “were standing before Him,” NASB and “stood to attend Him.” NLT

Millions stand before the Lord, waiting an assignment, eager to carry out His word. They do not stand merely to spectate, but to participate, instantly implementing His determinations. Their response is not delayed because they are standing in readiness before the Lord.

When His judgments are carried out, they fall on their faces before the throne saying, “Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 7:12). What a marvelous environment exists “around the throne.”

What Must They Think of Earthly Assemblies

We know the angels are noted for being in the assemblies of the saints (1 Cor 10:11). I have often pondered how such assemblies must impress these holy angels. Having wafted their way from such an environment as Daniel was given to see, what must they think of assemblies where people sit in the back, scramble for the door, and show looks and attitudes of near-total disinterest? I do understand that men have grown accustomed to such assemblies, but find it exceedingly difficult to believe the holy angels are able to do so. It simply clashes too sharply with the realm from which they come.

For that matter, those believers who choose to remain in the “heavenly places” where God has raised them (Eph 2:6), are equally discontent with gatherings that are not conscience of the heavenly throne.

THESE HOSTS MINISTER TO US

Now, under Christ Jesus, the vast throng that is around the throne of God are all marshaled to minister to those who are heirs of salvation. As it is written, “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb 1:13-14). The very thought of such a multitude working in our behalf as they are commissioned by God, brings refreshment and encouragement to the soul. Furthermore, they are faithful in their ministry, never being caught off-guard or unprepared.

Something To Learn

There is something to be learned here about faithfully serving the Lord. Such service requires that we remain close to the throne – entering boldly into the most holy place with a true heart, a purged conscience, and bodies washed with pure water. I am afraid there is a lot of religious effort being expended in the church by people who are actually living at a distance from the Lord. They are unaware of His presence, purpose, and will. Such people are too aware of this world, and too unaware of the world to come. Their hearts are too close to the earth, and too far from heaven.

The thing that makes such a condition so serious is that Christ was put to death in the flesh and quickened by the Spirit that He might “bring us to God” (1 Pet 3:18). There simply is no place in the Kingdom of God for dwelling at a distance from the Lord. Such a posture will not allow the individual to either love or obey the Lord with any degree of acceptability or consistency. Rather, it puts them squarely under the influence of the devil, and places them on the path of inevitable defeat. Such a condition is inexcusable.

THE DETERMINATION AND NATURE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT

“ 10c . . . the judgment was set, and the books were opened.”

The very words of this verse tug at the heart. If you will ponder them, there is something about them that is most arresting. They speak of a time of inevitable confrontation – a time when an account will be given to God. That account may be given by a generation (Matt 12:11), a nation (Jer 12:16-17), a church (Rev 2:4), and an individual (Rom 14:12). There is no way to avoid having to give an account of ourselves to God. The only hope is to take advantage of His salvation, in which He is “able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24).

THE JUDGMENT WAS SET

“ . . . the judgment was set . . . ” Other versions read, “The court was seated,” NKJV “The court sat,” NASB “The court sat in judgment,” NRSV “the Judge was seated,” BBE “the court was in session,” NJB “Then the court began its session,” NLT and “the Judge is seated.” YLT

Judgment Begins

This language depicts the commencement of judgment . The words “was set” do not emphasize Divine appointment, although His judgment is appointed. Rather, them emphasis the beginning of judgment – the carrying out of Divine evaluation and sentencing. In this portion of the vision, Daniel sees God putting a Divine “period” to the reign of earthly powers. In His great power He simply brings their dominion to a conclusion, and calls the participants into judgment to give an account. The power of these kings and kingdoms came from God, and now He calls them into account for their use of it. All the while, from the highest point of view, they have been fulfilling His purpose. In spite of their ruthless and godless spirit, God still worked all things together for the good of His people – including those in captivity.

The Employment of Others

Some versions have the Judge being seated. BBE,YLT Others have the court of judges being seated. NKJV,NASB Still others say the court was I session NJB,NLT . Of course, all of these are true. When the Lord judges, He does employ others in that judgment. In historical judgments He employed holy angels, as in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:13). He even summoned Nebuchadnezzar to carry out His judgment against Judah (1 Chron 6:15). God called Cyrus His “battle axe and weapons of war,” used to bring down Babylon (Jer 51:20ff).

In the ultimate day of judgment, “He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained ; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). Jesus, in turn, will employ the saints of God, who will judge both men and angels (1 Cor 6:1-2).

The point is that such judgment will come. It cannot be averted or mitigated. It is still true, God has “appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness.”

The Day of Judgment

“The day of judgment” is frequently mentioned in Scripture. Wherever it is cited, the reference always is in accord with the text before us.

Writers during the time of the Old Covenant referred to this time – a day of judgment. The Chronicles declare the Lord will come “to judge the earth” (1 Chron 16:33). Job referred to it as a “day of wrath” (Job 21:30), and a day when God will rise up and visit (Job 31:13-14). David called it a time when God would come with fire, not keep silence, and “judge His people” (Psa 50:3-6). He also said God would “judge the world in righteousness” (Psa 96:13; 98:9). Solomon said God would call every word and work into judgment (Eccl 11:9; 12:14).

Jesus referred to “the day of judgment” six times (Matt 10:15 and Mark 6:11; 11:22,24; 12:36). Peter uses that same expression twice (2 Pet 2:9; 3:7). John uses it once (1 John 4:17). Jesus referred to the same day as “THE judgment” (Matt 12:12; Lk 10:14; 11:31-32). The Spirit also refers to “the judgment” as a day to which each person has been appointed (Heb 9:27). Jude refers to it as “the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6). Paul referred to this time as “judgment to come” (Acts 24:25), “the day when God shall judge the secrets of men” (Rom 2:16), and “the time” (1 Cor 4:5).

Daniel Sees It

Now Daniel, centuries before Christ, is given to see this day – the appointed time of accountability. It will take place before the throne that has ruled the world from the day of its birth. Daniel had previously announced to Nebuchadnezzar, “the heavens do rule” (4:26). That truth will be confirmed on the day of judgment. Those who have believed it here, sought that Kingdom “first,” and lived their lives as a thank offering to God, will have nothing to fear on that day. In fact, they will stand before the Lord’s throne with “exceeding joy” (Jude 24-25) and “boldness” (1 John 4:17).

For all others, there will not be a single aspect of that time that will not strike fear into their hearts. Those who have lived in apathy toward the Lord will be apathetic no longer. Those who have been turned aside by distractions will be distracted no longer.

THE BOOKS WERE OPENED

“ . . . and the books were opened.” These are the same books John saw “opened,” when the dead, both small and great, will “stand before God” (Rev 20:12). They are the books out of which men will be judged. As it is written, “The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (Rev 20:12). I understand that men have been eager to develop theologies that cause men to ignore these books. Such attempts present “the dead” as referring to those who are alienated from God and enemies of His people. However, in this text, “the dead” refers to all humanity. They are called “the dead” in relation to their lives upon the earth. After the heavens and earth have passed away (verse 11), everyone living at that time will have been separated from their bodies, and thus will fall into the general category of “the dead.” This is an expression that denotes everyone who lived on the earth. All of them will be judged out of “the books.” That is the Spirit’s affirmation.

“The books” confirm there is a record in heaven of everything every person has done. Having received understanding on this matter, Paul wrote, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether

it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10). Again it is written, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12). This refers to the time when “the books were opened.”

Jesus said, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment . For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Mat 12:36-37). It is on the part of wisdom to take these words seriously, making no attempt to explain them away.

Scriptural Confirmations

Now, before the day of judgment , the Lord has made known some of the things written in these books. These records have been passed down through the generations to confirm to our hearts that God knows what men do.

Ponder the records of the sin of Adam and Eve, Cain’s murder of Abel, Enoch’s prophecy, Noah building the ark, and the ambitions of those who attempted to build the tower of Babel. Think of the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, the faith of Abraham, the acknowledgments of Jacob, and the faithfulness of Joseph. There is both the sin and repentance of David, the defection of Solomon, and the repentance of Manasseh. There is the denial of Peter, as well as his bold preaching. There is the persecution instituted by Saul of Tarsus, and his devoted life after he was converted. Ponder the lying of Ananias and Sapphira, and the boldness of Peter and John. There is the abandonment of Demas and the faithfulness of Timothy, the heresy of Hymenaeus and Philetus and the faithful preaching of Philip in Samaria.

All of these things were written years after they were lived out. The record of them is a sort of miniature representation of “the books” being opened.

The opening of the books is the ultimate fulfillment of the Lord’s words, “For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it should come to light” (Mark 4:22). Even Solomon, in all of his discontentment with the vanity of life, knew this was true. “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl 12:14).

When “the books are opened,” God will be fully vindicated in everything He has said. What He has said about the world will be seen to be true. Every single aspect of the record He has given of His Son will be found faithful and true. His statements about both sin and righteousness, their nature and their rewards, will be confirmed. The urgency of salvation will be fully substantiated, together with the utter heinousness of sin and transgression.

Indeed, when “the books are opened,” this will be fulfilled: “let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged” (Rom 3:4). Everything written in the books that is contrary to what God has said will be

exposed and condemned. Everything that is in harmony with what He said will be confirmed as acceptable, and those doing those things will “receive praise from God” (1 Cor 4:5). This will be the time of extremes, with nothing being neutral.

WHAT IS INTENDED BY THIS?

Precisely what is intended by this aspect of the vision? It is evident from the text that follows that it is in some way associated with a form of temporal judgment. The fourth fierce beast is killed, and its body destroyed and “thrown into the blazing fire” that surrounded the throne of God NIV (v 11). The other beasts had their dominion taken away, yet “were allowed to live for a period of time” NIV (v 12). This does not sound like the final day of judgment, for none of God’s enemies will live for a while after that (2 Thess 1:9).

The judgment of God will have its culmination on the day He has appointed to judge the world in righteousness. However, there have been times when that Divine judgment has burst forth in fury in a preliminary fashion. By the grace of God, these times are not common, but they stand as a testimony to the coming “day of judgment.” Two notable examples of such occasions are the flood, in which “all flesh died” (Geb 7:21), and Sodom and Gomorrah who “suffered the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7).

These catastrophic judgments issued from the same God on the same throne before which every person will stand. They were a harbinger of coming judgment, and are to be so considered.

In Daniel’s vision, he was given to see the God of heaven in the capacity of the Judge of all the earth. He was transported to the time when the books would be opened, and all men would give an account of themselves. Now he will be shown that this very God, from this very throne, will show His great power by throwing down invincible kingdoms – chiefly the one that appeared more dominant and ruthless than the others.

The purpose of the vision is not to move our attention to the judgment of inimical powers, but to the One who exercises that judgment. It is the same One before whom we ourselves will stand.

A Divine Manner

The Word of God confirms this is the manner in which the Lord works. That is, he brings some men into account for their sins while they are yet upon the earth, in order that the rest of the people may fear. Some works are judged beforehand. Thus it is written, “The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them ; the sins of others trail behind them” NIV (1 Tim 5:24). This visitation by no means removes such souls from the final judgment. Rather, it is a token of what is inevitable for all of God’s enemies.

By the same token, the good of some men, together with God's favor toward them, is sometimes recognized prior to the day of judgment, when "every man will have praise of God." For this reason it is written, "Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden" NKJV (1 Tim 5:25). The nature of their good deeds is not simply confirmed by men seeing their goodness and applauding the worker. Rather, it is corroborated by the obvious favor of God upon them – like the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, and Daniel from the lion's den.

Summation

Before proceeding with the revelation, therefore, God pushes the thinking of Daniel to the end of time. He shows him the ultimate destiny of all men, and the ultimate assize at which they will be present. With that perspective in mind, He now proceeds to confirm to Daniel the futility of the fourth beast, and the ultimate vanity of the "little horn."

God conducts the affairs of this world with the day of judgment in mind, and we do well to conduct our affairs in the same way. What is more, He deals with men in precise harmony with the edicts that will be made known at the day of judgment. Both His blessings and His curses are in strict comportment with the ultimate day of Divine reckoning.

By that I do not mean those who are judged unfavorably here will, of necessity, be judged unfavorably there. Although we are not to linger long upon such a thought, it is true, "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Cor 11:32). Unlike the judgment of the world in the flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, there are judgments designed to induce repentance. Notwithstanding that circumstance, they also confirm to us the absolute intolerance with sin that will be revealed on "the day of judgment."

THE DESTINATION OF ALL WHO OPPOSE GOD

" 11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame."

We enter a text now that is characterized by violence – Divine violence. To some, such language is highly offensive, for they find great difficulty in thinking of the Living God in such a way. However, this is the representation of the Holy Spirit, who moved upon holy men to write in such a manner (2 Pet 1:21). It must also be remembered that this is how the Lord revealed Himself to Daniel, which indicates this is an aspect of His Person that He intends for us to understand. Should we choose to receive such a

revelation, it will help to deliver us from demeaning views of the Lord and His works. We will therefore be the less inclined to tempt Him and tax His patience with foolish and indulgent living.

There is also a principle of truth that is made known here. These four beasts, and particularly the fourth one, were noted for their violence. The fourth one had great iron teeth, and ate up its victims, trampling under foot whatever was left (7:7). Now, this beast will reap what it has sown. Thus the word of Jesus is fulfilled, "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Mat 26:52).

As far back as the days of Noah, the Lord inculcated this law, applying it to both individuals and nations as well. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen 9:6). The Lord gave a message for Ezekiel to give to those who had slain His people in their calamity. It voiced the very principle of which I speak. "Because you have had an ancient hatred, and have shed the blood of the children of Israel by the power of the sword at the time of their calamity, when their iniquity came to an end, therefore, as I live," says the Lord GOD, 'I will prepare you for blood, and blood shall pursue you; since you have not hated blood, therefore blood shall pursue you" (Ezek 35:5-6).

Again, on the Isle of Patmos, the Lord Jesus Christ made this mode of Divine operation known to John. "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity : he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword " (Rev 13:10). Thus, before the Law, during the Law, and after the Law, this principle has been revealed. It does not sanction men taking matters into their own hands, but does accentuate that God DOES deal with violent man after this manner.

I fear that contemporary Christianity has been skewed to present God as though He was a doting old man, highly tolerant of the insolence of men, and quite willing to endure their absurdities. But this is a wholly inaccurate appraisal of the Living God. Even when it comes to this great day of salvation, in which the way to God has been thrown open and the Divine welcome mat spread out, we read of this aspect of God. "he that believeth not shall be damned " (Mark 16:16); "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Th 1:9); "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire " (Rev 20:15); "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy " (1 Cor 3:17); "and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath " (Rev 16:19).

I BEHELD

"I beheld then . . ." Other versions read, "I watched then, " NKJV "Then I kept looking," NASB and "I continued to watch." NIV Here again, the attentiveness of the man of God is evident. He does not allow himself to be moved from what God is showing him. His heart and his mind are involved in the vision. It is as though he has become one with it, refusing to leave as long as there is something to be seen.

For those who desire to receive understanding from God, this posture of mind is necessary. As long as a person's attention can be moved from the Lord and His Word, nothing much, if anything, will be learned. All tutelage – every bit of it – that is attempted without the riveted attention of the disciple, is in vain. If you do not pay attention to what the Lord is saying or revealing, you will receive nothing from it. The things of God simply cannot be learned with a mind that is divided.

BECAUSE OF THE VOICE

“ . . . because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake.” Other versions read, “because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking.” NKJV “because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking,” NASB “because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking,” NRSV and “I continued to watch because I could hear the little horn's boastful speech.” NLT

As Daniel beholds the vision, he is attracted by the arrogant speaking of the “little horn.” Although the “little horn” was himself to be overthrown by the Lord, it is unaware of that circumstance. With great pride it speaks as though it is over all. Daniel knows such haughtiness will not be overlooked by the Lord, and thus he listens and waits patiently. He knows the speech of the “little horn” is not the last thing that will be said. The real situation has registered upon the spirit of Daniel. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov 16:18).

You will remember the “little horn” of reference is said to have had “a mouth uttering great boasts” (v 8). NASB Later it is said of this horn, “And he shall speak great words against the most High” (Dan 7:25). This parallels the beast of the thirteenth chapter of Revelation, of which it is said, “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things . . . And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God , to blaspheme His name , and His tabernacle , and them that dwell in heaven ” (Rev 13:5-6).

Daniel's “little horn” is an extension of the fourth beast in the same way John's “second beast” is an extension of the first one (Rev 13:11-12). It is a religious power that operates upon the same basis as the kingdoms of this world. In both cases, I understand this power to be religious in nature, yet it is corrupt to the core. It is a power that comes in the name of Christ. Thus it is not as readily apparent as a power coming in the name of another god, like the Assyrian army against Israel, God's people (2 Kgs 19:10-12).

This is an opponent of the Lord, of His truth, and of His people, speaking “blasphemy,” or “great things” . Blasphemy, by definition, is speaking evil of God. It speaks of desecration, profanation, and sacrilege. It also involves claiming the attributes of Deity , which is one of the primary meanings of the English word. MERRIAM-WEBSTER This “little horn” also parallels Paul's “man of sin” and “son of perdition,” of whom it is said, “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess 2:4).

Keep in mind, the manner in which this “little horn” spoke is being assessed by God Himself. He does not appear this way to the inhabitants of the earth, else he would not meet with such success as he does. This is religious deception – specifically deception that comes in the name of Jesus Christ.

Daniel carefully watches because of the speaking of this arrogant personality. He knows such insolence will not go unrequited. God cannot be opposed and maligned with impunity.

THE BEAST WAS SLAIN

“ . . . beheld even till the beast was slain . . . ” As Daniel kept on looking, the impressive fourth beast that was “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly,” and different from all of the beasts before it “was slain.” The death is not attributed to anyone upon the earth, for it is a judgment from above – a judgment that issued forth from “the Ancient of days” who sat upon a mobile throne that was like a blazing fire. Here, in the slaying of the fourth beast, is another confirmation that “the heavens do rule.”

The ungodly power of this fourth beast reached its apex in the reign of the “little horn,” which spoke arrogantly, as though there was no God. It spoke as though it ruled the world. The beast was not slain merely on its own account, or because of the ten horns, or “kings” (verse 23) that it boasted. It is this “little horn,” who “spoke great words against the Most High,” and wore out the saints of God, thinking to change times and laws made by God (verse 25) – this is the reason the fourth beast is slain!

It is bad enough when a kingdom rises that is ruthless, eager for power, and merciless in the extension of its dominion. But when that power speaks out against the Most High, oppresses and maligns the saints of God, and tries to change set times and laws, it has moved into the path of sure destruction.

HIS BODY DESTROYED

“ . . . and his body destroyed . . . ” Not only was the beast killed, its body was destroyed – that is, brought to the point where it could never rise again . In the vision, the body of this beast is what made it so dreadful and terrible. It was its form, not its heart, that gave it its power. When, therefore, its body is destroyed, the whole of its power is decimated, and it is no longer a political entity.

GIVEN TO THE BURNING FLAME

“ . . . and given to the burning flame.” The “burning fire” denotes the throne, or sovereign rule, of the Almighty God. The body of the fourth beast being thrown into this consuming fire, or Divine power, means it is utterly destroyed by God – like Sodom and Gomorrah.

This burning is equivalent to the grinding up of kingdoms by Daniel’s small stone that became a

mountain, filling the whole earth. As it is written, “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors ; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them : and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Dan 2:35).

This text is elaborating on that same truth, focusing on the fourth kingdom, and showing how it suffered a special judgment from God. The first vision of Nebuchadnezzar dealt with the four empires as a whole, revealing what they had in common. This vision deals with them again showing them to be different, each one excelling the other in ruthlessness, until the fourth kingdom, which was the most despotic of all. Because of this circumstance, a special judgment falls upon it.

More Focused Teaching

Because this vision contains even more focused teaching on the fourth kingdom and the “little horn” (vs 23-25), I must forebear further comments upon it now. It is enough to remind you that the fourth beast is the Roman government, and that a ruthless opponent of Christ will rise out of it. That power will rise while Rome is in its strength, and will be the reason for its utter demise. It will also be religious in nature.

STANDS FOR ALL OPPONENTS

When the saints read this passage of Scripture, they must guard against the tendency to treat it as mere history – as though their enemies had all been destroyed already. This vision has been given to assure us of the triumph of our God and His Christ. It confirms to us the overthrow and destruction of the worst opponents, to say nothing of the lesser ones.

When the wicked are considered by Jesus, they are often grouped together, without regard to identifying the worst of them, as is done in this text. This is because Jesus dealt with their nature, which was corrupt and ungodly. Thus He reminded us of the end of them all, lest we be discouraged by their presence and seeming power.

- The wicked are “bad” fish, caught in the net of Divine purpose, which will eventually be “thrown away” (Matt 13:48).
- They are “chaff” that will be thoroughly purged from the floor of God’s kingdom and “burned with unquenchable fire” (Matt 3:12).
- They are “goats,” which will finally and eternally be separated from God’s people (Matt 25:32).
- They are “tares,” which will gathered and burned (Matt 13:36).

- They are unacceptable “plants” that will be “pulled up by the roots” (Matt 15:13).
- They are “things that offend,” that will be gathered out of God’s world (Matt 13:41).

Thus, we have not been introduced to something new. From the very beginning, God has revealed the destruction of those aligned against Him. That is the essence of the Seed of woman bruising, or crushing, the head of the serpent (Gen 3:15). The bruising of Satan includes all who are aligned with him – all who have been deceived by him.

Before men fall into the pit of idle curiosity, they must read the book of Daniel with the light of the Gospel shining upon it. They must not allow themselves to become enamored of the fourth beast or the little horn. They will share the same fate as every individual who knows not God and obeys not the Gospel (2 Thess 1:8-9). That seemingly elementary bit of knowledge clarifies this otherwise difficult text, causing it to bring profit to the soul.

A DIVINE MANNER OF REASONING

We are witnessing a certain Divine manner of reasoning. In order to show the sure destruction of all inimical powers, the Lord comments first upon the utter destruction of the worst of them. What is true of that power, will eventually be true of all lesser powers that are focused against the saints. Thus the destiny of the fourth kingdom is, in the end, the destiny of them all. The removal of that kingdom stands for the removal of all the kingdoms of this world. The destruction of the body of that fourth beast stands for the destruction of all who push forward in the energy of the flesh. The burning of that beast with fire assures us of the final consignment of everyone who neither knows nor obeys God to the lake of fire. That is how believers in Christ must learn to see this passage. That is the area where our greatest understanding must be found.

Finally, at this point, we are considering causes, not times . While Daniel will be shown some very specific things about time, they will relate more to the Lord Jesus and His atoning death than to the rise and fall of inimical powers. Here we are being shown the nature of worldly power. It is, in character, ruthless and beastly, eventually opposing God and His people. In that opposition its nature is revealed, and that is why it is destroyed.

This is because flesh falls under the condemnation of Adam, not the salvation of Christ. Whatever is not identified with Christ, whether an individual or a nation, tends to deteriorate, becoming worse, not better.

WHEN DOMINION IS TAKEN AWAY

“ 12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.”

I want to emphasize how different “the mind of the Spirit” is to “the mind of the flesh.” Man would chart the course of these kingdoms from their beginning. The Spirit traces it from their conclusion. In other words, He gives us to see things from their end instead of their beginning.

For example, when we are moved by the Lord to consider the world, our primary frame of reference is not the creation of the world, but the end of the world . For this reason, we are to consider ourselves “strangers and pilgrims” in the world (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11). In order to assist us in avoiding the ensnarements of this world, we are reminded, “the fashion of this world passeth away” (1 Cor 7:31). Solemnly we are told, “the world passeth away and the lust thereof” (1 John 2:17).

Additionally, we are to live our lives in view of what will occur at “the end.” That is how long we are to “endure” (Matt 10:22). Then is when we will see the Lord as He is (1 John 3:1-2). Then we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom 14:10). Pondering these things has a way of shaping our thinking, enabling us to form proper values and conduct our lives honorably.

Similarly, the Lord is showing us “the end” of these great empires in order that we might think properly of them. When we see their end, we will not fear what they will do to us, for God has promised us a blessed eternity. How, then, can we be ultimately harmed by powers that are destined to failure. Or, for that matter, how can we be eternally advantaged by powers that will all be crushed by the mighty power of God?

These powers are the world in its more organized and profitable state. Their destiny includes the doom of all other worldly enterprises, such as business, entertainment, pleasure, etc.

THEIR DOMINION WAS TAKEN AWAY

“As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away . . .” Other versions read, “The other beasts had been stripped of their authority,” NIV “their authority was taken away,” BBE and “The other beasts were deprived of their empire.” NJB

And how is it that these beasts – these three governments – were stripped of their power and authority? Was this the work of men or of God? If “the heavens do rule,” and God is, in fact, “the Governor among the nations,” this is an act of God. This is the judgment of “the Ancient of days,” who is

enthroned and rules over all. He is the One who gave them their power (Rom 13:1), and He is the One who took it away! There were other nations who were instrumental in the demise of these kingdoms, but they were clay in the hands of the heavenly Potter.

The judgment against them was less harsh, because the fourth beast's transgressions were greater. Their sin was, in a sense, like the sin of Pilate as compared to the priests and leaders of the Jews who demanded Christ's death. You will recall that Jesus said to Pilate, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19:11).

The demise of these kingdoms, therefore, was not simply an historical progression, or evidence of the survival of the fittest. There really are no accidents in history – particularly in the matter of the fall of nations. They have been Divinely deprived of their power and authority.

We will find that the power of God is employed in a very precise and deliberate manner. It is not like the power of ruthless beasts that leave a path of purposeless destruction. There is no gracious intention in it, or noble motives. How sharply they contrast with "the Ancient of days," who governs His Kingdom in holiness, and seeks the ultimate good of those who trust Him.

The dominion of the three other beasts, Babylon, Persia, and Greece, was taken from them, yet they were allowed to continue in a state of decided reduction. This diminution of power and influence was imposed upon them. It was not an act of humility.

These kingdoms, then continued to exist in a subordinate form. Viewed politically, governors from the nation that overcame them ruled them. Daniel lived in Babylon when this very thing occurred. Dominion was taken away from Babylon, yet it continued to exist as a subsidiary of the Medes and Persians. The same thing was true of the Persian and Grecian empires. The people of those empires remained, yet were in subordination to their conquerors. This was not the case with the fourth beast.

THEIR LIVES WERE PROLONGED

“ . . . yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.” Other versions read, “but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time,” NASB “but were allowed to live for a period of time,” NIV “that times of life were appointed them for a time, and a time,” DOUAY “but a prolonging of life was given them for certain times,” Septuagint and “but received a lease of life for a season and a time.” NJB

And from whence did this extension of life come? Certainly not from man, for man cannot add a single cubit to his stature, much less prolong the life of a kingdom. It did not come from Satan, for he cannot effect a single individual apart from God's permission (Job 1-2), much less make empires last a little longer.

It should be obvious to us that God Almighty – “the Ancient of days” who sits upon an unhindered throne – granted this brief annex of existence. This is involved in God’s determination of “the times set for” men, and “the exact places where they should live” NIV (Acts 17:26). For example, God allowed Babylon to continue for an appointed period because His servant Daniel was still there, and had not yet completed His work.

The Divine appointment is said to have been for “a season and a time.” A “season” is a period of unspecified duration, as Satan departed from Jesus “for a season” (Lk 4:13). A “time” is generally understood to stand for a year – as in “seven times” passing while Nebuchadnezzar grazed as a wild beast in the field (Dan 4:16,23).

Thus, the purpose here is not to delineate a specific period of time, but to confirm the Lord’s control of the situation. From His vantage point it was very precise – “a time.” So far as we are concerned, there was no need for specificity here – “a season.”

This kind of language speaks to the heart of the people of God. It is food for faith, and nourishment for the soul. It reminds us the Lord is in control – precise control. It also confirms there is no need for us to know all of the details of His government. His objective for us is to know Him, not every detail of His inscrutable workings.

Thus, after having much of God’s will revealed to Him, yet few of its details, Paul exclaimed, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom 11:33-36).

That, dear reader, is precisely how we are to respond to this marvelous text! Our faith must dictate that response. It is commentary on the Lord’s “doing” in the world in which we live. It represents one aspect of what is involved in working all things together for our good.

CONCLUSION

I do not cease to marvel at the manner in which the Lord unfolds His “eternal purpose.” Through Daniel, He has shown us something of what He has determined, and how it will all work out in the world. From a human point of view, history is like the appearance and removal of wild beasts who run roughshod over their opponents. There appears to be much chaos, disorder, and a lack of justice and equity.

But we are not to “judge according to appearance” (John 7:24), for it is deceiving. Neither God nor His work are evident to the flesh – they are not apparent to the eyes of men. Notwithstanding, “the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa 6:3). Heaven knows it! Were it not for the revelations of God, as in the book of Daniel, we would not know it.

God is assuring our hearts that He is fully able to so orchestrate our lives as to bring us to the haven of rest. He has placed His government upon the shoulder of His Son, and charged Him with bringing us to glory (Heb 2:10). He will do precisely that for all who will trust him.

If the Lord could maintain Daniel from his teens to a prophet of seasoned years, he can surely sustain you! If He can protect him in Babylon, through three different dynasties, He will have no difficulty supporting you. He is working everything together for the good of those who love Him, and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). Sometimes that involves raising up kings and kingdoms. Sometimes it requires putting them down.

In the knowledge of these firm realities, the great benedictions of holy men make a lot of sense. Allow me to close by giving you some of them. It will be apparent to you that it requires a Sovereign God to bring them all to pass. They are all exceeding great and precious promises – and they are for you.

- “The LORD make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num 6:25-26).
- “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb 13:20-21).
- “Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling , and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen” (Jude 1:24-25).
- “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape , that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor 10:13).
- “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you ; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; He hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now He that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food , and multiply your seed sown , and increase the fruits of your righteousness ” (2 Cor 9:10).

- “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Th 5:23-24).
- “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints” (1 Th 3:13).
- “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect , stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pet 5:10).

And who is the precious soul to whom such statements do not sound good? Even if a person has been subjected to harsh teaching that says such promises are not applicable to us, yet they have a good sound to them. That sound is a good and true one, and is to be nurtured in faith. Do not hesitate to take these things into your heart, ponder them, and seek with all your heart to appropriate them. They are fully intended for those who are in Christ Jesus, and will not be withheld from those who eagerly pursue them.

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE SON OF MAN

Lesson #21

INTRODUCTION

In the book of Daniel, the grandeur of earthly kingdoms is diminished by the glory of God. As soon as men appear to be invincible, and their kingdoms unconquerable, our attention is turned to the God of heaven. If circumstances arise that seem to put the people of God in an impossible situation, our hearts are made to consider the Living God who both intervenes in the affairs of men and controls them. The consistency of this is most remarkable, as the following instances confirm. These are all recorded in Daniel prior to our text.

CONTROLS

- When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, captured the king, and carried away vessels of the Temple, we are told the Lord gave these things into his hand (1:1-12).
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom, majesty, glory, and honor (2:37-38; 5:18-19).
- The breath of Belshazzar was in God's hand, and his ways were from Him (5:23).
- God numbered Belshazzar's kingdom, finished it, weighted Him in the balances, found him deficient, and gave his kingdom to the Medes and Persians (5:26-28).

The affairs of this world are under the control of the God of heaven. If this was not the case, He could not work all things together for our good (Rom 8:28), and would be powerless to not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear (1 Cor 10:13). Neither, indeed, could He nourish and sustain the people of God through the various difficulties and vicissitudes of life. All of those things presume the control of God.

INTERVENES

- God brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs (1:9).
- God gave the four children of Judah knowledge, skill, and wisdom (1:17).
- The Lord revealed the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel (2:19,23).
- God made known to Nebuchadnezzar what would take place in the latter days (2:28,29).
- In the reign of powerful kings, God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed (2:44,45).
- God sent His angel, delivering the three from the fiery furnace (3:28).
- God decreed the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar by driving him from men, and causing him to live with beasts and eat grass (4:24-25).
- In one hour, God humbled Nebuchadnezzar as He had decreed, deposing him from the throne (4:31-33; 5:20).
- God delivered a message to Belshazzar during a feast, sending a hand that inscribed a message on the wall of the palace (5:5).
- God numbered Belshazzar's kingdom, finished it, weighed Him in the balances, found him deficient, and gave his kingdom to the Medes and Persians (5:26-28).

- God sent an angel and delivered Daniel from the lions (6:22).
- Daniel sees Divine judgment intruding into the affairs of men, ridding the world of despotic governments (7:9-10).

The saved of the Lord are not left to their own, and their enemies do not operate with a free and unhindered hand. God, because of His great power and nature, can break into the affairs of men for either blessing or cursing, for lifting up or casting down.

DECLARATIONS OF SOVEREIGNTY

- God changes times, removes and sets up kings, gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those of understanding (2:21).
- God reveals deep and secret things, knows what is in darkness, and light dwells with Him (2:22).
- The God of heaven reveals secrets (2:28).
- God is the God of gods, Lord of kings, and Revealer of secrets (2:47).
- God was able to deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace (3:17).
- There is no god who can deliver as the God of heaven (3:29).
- God's signs are great, His wonders mighty, His kingdom everlasting, and His dominion from generation to generation (4:3).
- The Most High rules in the kingdoms of men, giving them to whomever He pleases (4:25).
- God lives forever, His dominion is everlasting, and His kingdom from generation to generation (4:34).
- God does what He desires in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and no one can hinder or question Him (4:35; 5:21).
- All of God's works are truth, His ways judgment, and He is able to abase those who walk in pride (4:37).

- God is the living God, is steadfast forever, His kingdom will not be destroyed, and His dominion will be to the end (6:26).
- God delivers, rescues, and works signs and wonders in heaven and earth (6:27).

This is a point God wants the world to know. He taught the world this aspect of His nature in the flood, the dispersion at Babel, the calling of Abraham, and the deliverance of Israel. It is also seen in the sustaining of those who live by faith, and the inability of the devil and his hosts to carry out their will.

OBSERVATION

As if this remarkable and consistent testimony is not enough, Daniel has been shown the throne of God – a throne established for judgment and reckoning with His creation. That judgment is seen not only as incontestable, but irresistible. While some theologians have concocted jargon like “irresistible grace,” they ought to be thinking more about the inevitability, certainty, and finality of Divine judgment.

Now the Divine manner is once again chronicled in Daniel’s vision. Because the final phase of worldly history is governed by “the Man Christ Jesus,” He is now introduced to Daniel. This is the One who appeared “to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb 9:26). He is the One who “destroyed” the devil (Heb 2:14), “blotted out” the “handwriting of ordinances that was against us” (Col2:14), and plundered “principalities and powers” (Col 2:15). He is the One through whom God speaks to men in “these last days” (Heb 1:1-2). This is the One who alone enabled God to be both “Just and Justifier” (Rom 3:26).

This is the One through whom God will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31), and to whom all judgment has been committed (John 5:22). It is not possible, therefore, to focus upon the demise of worldly kingdoms without bringing “the Son of man” into the picture. Nearly six centuries before “the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), Daniel is given to see Him in majesty and splendor.

THE INTENTION OF THIS SECTION

The intention of this section is to confirm that the most powerful and successful governments of this world could not delay the promised coming of the Messiah for one millisecond . From Daniel’s vantage point, He would enter the world on schedule, return to heaven, and would receive all power in heaven and earth. For the believers of succeeding generations, this is intended to confirm that Divine purpose drove the entrance of Christ, not mere human need – although that was in the Divine equation. Not only did Babel, the Medo-Persians, Greece, and Rome, rise when God had determined, and continue only as long as He had purposed, the ultimate King also appeared when God had appointed. Satan was powerless to thwart the coming of Christ, His atonement, His resurrection, His ascension, or His enthronement. Neither, indeed, will he be able to delay His judgment for a moment, nor will those who oppose “the Son of man” be able to avoid that judgment. The reins of the Kingdom are in His hand alone, and He is wielding that power wisely for the good of the saints.

ONE LIKE THE SON OF MAN

“ 7:13a I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven . . . ”

While we may have grown accustomed to hearing of the humanity of the Savior, this aspect of His person has not always been clear. Although there were frequent references to the Redeemer being a Man, the experience of the people of God was quite different. The grandest displays of Divine intervention came through the disposition of angels, not mere men. This was true of the flood, when God came “with ten thousands of His saints” (Jude 1:14), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 10:1-15), the deliverance Israel from Egypt (Num 20:16), and the giving of the Law (Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19). Even the personal deliverances recorded in this book came through the hands of holy angels (3:28; 6:22).

Now Daniel will be shown a Man with Divine qualities – one who, although He is like man, is also like God. There is only one person in all of history who was 100% man and 100% God. That is the Lord Jesus Christ, and this part of the vision pertains to Him.

NIGHT VISIONS

“I saw in the night visions . . . ” Daniel keeps looking at the vision, and more of God’s purpose is unfolded to him. Thus other versions read , “I kept looking in the night visions,” NASB “As I watched in the night visions.” NRSV

It should be noted at this point that those who cannot concentrate on the things of God during the night, when there are fewer distractions, will not be able to adequately ponder them during the day, when there is more competition for their attention.

THE SON OF MAN

“ . . . and, behold, one like the Son of man . . . ” The magnificent visions that commenced in the first year of Belshazzar’s reign continue. They does not end with the appearance of beastly governments. Nor, indeed, do they conclude with the revelation of God the Judge. Daniel will be shown the means through which God will judge the world. It will be through a Man.

This is the only place in Moses and the Prophets where the coming Messiah is referred to as “the Son of man.” Although the expression is used 107 times in Genesis through Malachi, only here is it used

exclusively of the coming Redeemer. One other possible allusion is found in the eighth Psalm (80:17). However, it is not marked with the clarity of Daniel.

When the Spirit says “like the Son of man,” He means this Person had Divine qualities and exercised sovereign prerogatives, yet did so in the form of a man. “Like” does not mean He really was not a man, but that the appearance of a man was prominent in Him. Daniel was not seeing the Word “in the form of God” (Phil 2:6), but in His redemptive capacity as a man. Because the Word had not yet been made flesh, Daniel saw Him prophetically as “like the Son of man.” He was given to see the crucified, risen, exalted, and reigning Christ. The Savior never “took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men” until He appeared as a Babe in Bethlehem of Judea.

Because the humanity of Christ is so critical to our redemption, and the reason judgment has been given to Him, some time must be given to establishing this aspect of the Savior. We are saved through the humanity of Christ, and that is why much is made of this in Scripture.

Representations by Moses and the Prophets

Early in history, God revealed redemption from the fall would come from within humanity itself – the offspring of the woman. The offspring would be unique, to be sure, yet would be altogether “the Son of man” as well as “the Son of God.” Among other things, this meant the Savior would be discernible to men, and would be able to empathize with their condition.

Seed of woman. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel” (Gen 3:15).

Here is the first promise of a Savior, and it was spoken to the devil, with the whole human race being present. In it both the greatness of God and the minuteness of salvation are seen. The demise of the devil would come from the appointed Offspring of the very one Satan deceived! The Rescuer of humanity would come from the race itself – the very race of which it is said, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

Seed of Abraham. “For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham ” (Heb 2:16). “Now to Abraham and His seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ ” (Gal 3:16).

A man without a background of knowing God, whose lineage was traced back to idolatry (Josh 24:2), became the progenitor of a race through which the Savior would be brought into the world.

Prophet from the midst of Israel. “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken” (Deu 18:15).

From among the Israelites themselves, would come the Prophet bearing the message of salvation – the One through whom recovery from the fall would be accomplished. It would not come by an angel, but through a Man.

Son of David. “The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne” (Psa 132:11). “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David , the Son of Abraham” (Mat 1:1). “Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom 1:3).

Jesus Christ came from the kingly lineage of David. He was David’s ultimate Offspring, who would sit upon the throne from which the salvation of men and the open subjugation of the enemies of God is accomplished.

A Son is given. “For unto us a Child is born , unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa 9:6-7).

The ultimate “Jew” is the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus Jesus Himself affirmed, “salvation is of the Jews ” (John 4:22). In a very real sense, He is the Son of that nation, the Child given to them by the Living God.

Representation by Jesus and the Apostles

Word made flesh. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . .

And the Word was made flesh , and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:1,14).

Jesus entered the world, coming from the eternal realm. Micah said His goings forth were “ from everlasting” (5:2). Notwithstanding, He entered the world as a Man, being “made flesh.” His humanity is the Divinely appointed agency through which we are saved. That salvation consists of two parts. First, His atoning death Col 1:22; Heb 2:14). Second, His effective intercession (Heb 7:25). Both of these

required the humanity of Jesus – the Word becoming “flesh,” and dwelling among us.

Son of man. “ The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity” (Mat 13:41). “And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56). “And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man , clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle” (Rev 1:13). “And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man , having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle” (Rev 14:14).

The term “Son of man” not only accents the humanity of the Savior, but His preeminence among men. He is the premier Man, the ultimate Offspring of woman, and the appointed Representative of our race. He is, in fact, the ONLY Man God has accepted upon the basis of His person. All others are accepted by virtue of their identity with Him.

Made of a woman, made under the Law. “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law , to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal 4:4-5).

The woman, who was deceived by the devil (1 Tim 2:14), became the vehicle through which humanity is rescued from the fall! This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Having been brought into the world, the manhood of the Savior was confirmed by being subject to the Law of God. This is said of no angel, seraph, or cherub. Such holy personages obey God’s commandments, but are not subject to “the Law,” which is made for the lawless and disobedient.

The “Son of man,” however was “made under the Law,” not because He was disobedient, but because under it He would “learn obedience by the things that He suffered” (Heb 5:8). Although He did not sin, yet He “suffered being tempted” (Heb 2:18). All of that is involved in Jesus being called “the Son of man.” Incidentally, Jesus referred to Himself as “the Son of Man” no less than eighty-four times.

Likeness of sinful flesh. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh , and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom 8:3).

By saying “the likeness,” the Spirit is not suggesting the body of Jesus was not real. His was a very real body of flesh and blood: one in which He grew in wisdom, and stature, and favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). It was a body in which He was not only “tempted in all points like as we are” (Heb 4:15), but “suffered being tempted” (Heb 2:18). Yet, because Jesus was “undefiled” and “separate from sinners” (Heb 7:26), He is said to have come “in the likeness of sinful flesh.”

Made like unto His brethren. “Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted” (Heb 2:17-18).

In order for Jesus to save us, He had to be made like unto us. He had to meet the enemy of humanity on his own turf, so to speak. He had to pass through the same waters that had overflowed our race, and triumph over death as a Man. In particular, this qualified Him to be a merciful and faithful High Priest. He could now be touched with the feelings of human weakness. Because He Himself survived the assaults of the devil and the lure of the flesh, He is able to succor, or minister to, those who “are tempted.”

Last Adam. “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Cor 15:45).

Jesus was a Man whose lineage could be traced all the way back to Adam. Yet, He was “the last Adam.” That is, because He had no fleshly offspring, and from heaven’s view, the Adamic lineage actually ended with Him.

The fleshly lineage of Jesus is traced from Christ back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38), and from Abraham to Christ (Matt 1:1-17). That fleshly lineage abruptly terminated at Jesus, for He had no fleshly offspring as did all of the predecessors in His lineage. As the prophet said, “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living” (Isa 53:8; Acts 8:33). Yet, His offspring are more numerous than all the others. This is why He is called “Everlasting Father” (Isa 9:6). His “children” were given to Him by His Father (Heb 2:13-14), and are “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues” (Rev 7:9). Until Jesus comes again, members of this generation will remain on the earth as salt and light. Satan will not be able to remove this generation.

The precision of this view is confirmed in Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus. He cites forty-two generations, grouping them in three clusters of fourteen. He affirms fourteen generations to have passed “from Abraham to David” (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judas, Phares, Esrom, Aram, Aminadab, Naasson, Salmon, Booz, Obed, Jesse, David). Fourteen generations “from David to the carrying away into Babylon” (Solomon, Roboam, Abia, Asa, Josaphat, Joram, Ozias, Joatham, Achaz, Ezekias, Manasses, Amon, Josias, Jechonias). Fourteen remaining generations were “from the carrying away into Babylon until Christ” (Salathiel, Zorobabel, Abiud, Eliakim, Azor, Sadoc, Achim, Eliud, Eleazar, Matthan, Jacob, Joseph the husband of Mary, Jesus).

In counting these generation, it will become apparent that only forty-one are listed, not forty-two. Fourteen are listed from Abraham to David, and fourteen from David to the carrying away into Babylon. But only thirteen are listed from the carrying away unto Babylon to Christ Jesus. Some have attempted

to explain this by saying David and Josiah are counted twice. That mode of reckoning, however, leaves Christ out, terminating with Joseph. Still others are of the opinion the third list includes Mary as well as Joseph. Some believe Matthew made a mistake. Still others account for the difference by saying David is listed twice.

These explanations are wholly unacceptable. The word "begat" is mentioned thirty-nine times in this passage. Add to that number Joseph, who is not said to have begotten anyone, and Jesus who is not declared to have begotten any fleshly lineage, and you have forty-one generations, not forty-two.

The forty-second generation is accounted for in Christ's own generation, which was a spiritual one, not a fleshly one. That generation is His by virtue of redemption. It is written of them, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:29). The word "Christ's" denoted, then, His peculiar generation.

Second Man. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor 15:47).

Jesus began a new race – a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17), or new generation. He is, in this sense, "the Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom 8:29). In this view, all of "the brethren," including Himself, "are all of One (the Father), " for which cause He is not ashamed to call them "brethren" (Heb 2:11). From the standpoint of them being His generation, they are His children. Thus it is said of Him, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb 2:13). It is in this sense that His name includes "Everlasting Father" (Isa 9:6).

Took the form of a servant. "But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:7). The humanity of Christ required unequalled humility and condescension. By making Himself "of no reputation," He "emptied Himself," NASB divesting Himself of the prerogatives of Deity. In doing this, He did not cease to be Divine, but refused to conduct Himself in that capacity. He stooped to enter earth in "the form of a servant," humbling Himself to such a degree as to be "tempted" (Heb 4:15), "trust" in God (Heb 2:13), be "led by the Spirit" (Matt 4:1), grow in "wisdom," and "in favor with God and man" (Lk 2:52), and have "the grace of God upon Him" (Lk 2:40).

No person can afford to take lightly the fact that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

Made a little lower than the angels. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb 2:9).

Again, the condescension of the Savior is accented. Although in His most humble state, when He first entered into the world, all of the angels of God were commanded to worship Him (Heb 1:6), yet He was “made a little lower” than that mighty host of “ministering spirits.”

Temptation of. “For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18). “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15).

I have already said considerable about this aspect of Christ’s humanity. Yet, a few further observations are in order. There are some spiritual novices who say Jesus did not sin because it was impossible for Him to do so. His “temptation,” in their view, was no temptation at all, but only a mere technicality. Such notions are more than foolish, and display a serious lack of understanding. Jesus “suffered , being tempted” (Heb 2:18). On the eve of His betrayal, the temptation was strong that “there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him” (Luke 22:43). He thrice pled with the Father to let this cup pass from Him if it was possible to do so (Matt 26:39-44). His agonizing prayer during this time was accompanied with “strong crying and tears” (Heb 5:7). Let no one be so foolish as to suggest Jesus was not really tempted, or did not feel the tug of contrary influences. If such a postulate is true, He is not able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Such a view is a heresy of the worst rank.

Some of the Involvements

These are some of the involvements of “the Word becoming flesh” and dwelling among us. The humanity of Christ is the emphasis of appellation “Son of man.” God the Father is never referred to in this sense, nor is any angel. As I have shown, the Savior’s personal identity with the humanity was prophesied from the very beginning. It is expounded extensively in Apostolic doctrine. Some of the things accomplished by His humanity include the following.

- Humbled Himself (Phil 2:8).
- Took the form of a servant (Phil 2:7).
- Was obedient to His parents (Luke 2:41).
- Grew in stature and spirit (Luke 2:52).
- Became obedient (Phil 2:8).
- Suffered being tempted (Heb 2:8).
- He feared (Heb 5:7)
- Suffered death (Heb 2:9).
- Is able to succor those who are tempted (Heb 2:18).
- Is an effective Intercessor (Heb 7:25).
- Is able to be touched with the feeling of human weakness (Heb 4:15).
- Was led by the Spirit (Luke 4:1).
- Trusted in God (Heb 2:13).
- Spoke only what His Father taught Him (John 8:28).
- Did only what He saw the Father doing (John 5:19).
- Has been given all judgment because He is the Son of man (John 5:22).

It is particularly in this last capacity that Daniel now sees Him – as One who has received “all judgment.” As Jesus Himself affirmed, “For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also , because He is the Son of man . Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:26-29).

The emphasis here will not be the final judgment, but the sagacity associated with the government being now placed upon His shoulder. This will be made more clear in the verses that follow. What marvelous things were revealed to Daniel!

WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN

“ . . . came with the clouds of heaven . . . ” Other versions read , “coming with the clouds of heaven,” NKJV and “with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of man was coming. NASB

Those familiar with Scripture will recall the Lord’s use of these very words when referring to His return to earth. “they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Mat 24:30; Mk 13:26). “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven ” (Mat 26:64; Mk 14:62). In these texts, Jesus is referring to His second coming, when He returns to be seen by “every eye” (Rev 1:7).

This text, however, refers to Him coming to “the Ancient of days,” or “God the Father,” as Jesus called Him (John 6:27). This has reference to His ascension into heaven when “a cloud received Him out of their (the disciples) sight” – but into the presence of the Father (Acts 1:9).

Luke reminds us He will also return “in a cloud” (Lk 21:27). However, Daniel is being shown the return of the Messiah into heaven where He is presently enthroned in glory. That enthronement is the result of His triumphant death. This too will be made more clear in the verses that follow, which speak of the very time in which we presently are living. Suffice it to say, the level of revelation on this matter that is given to Daniel is most remarkable.

HE CAME TO THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

“ 13b . . . and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him.”

Allow me to clarify once again that Daniel is now being shown the exalted Christ. Later, he will be shown the vicarious death of Christ (9:26). But for now, the Son of man returning to the Father is what He sees.

HE CAME

“. . . and came to the Ancient of days . . .” Other versions read “He came UP to the Ancient of Days,” NASB/DARBY “He approached the Ancient of Days,” NIV and “and unto the Ancient of Days He hath come.” YLT

The entrance of the risen Savior into heaven is a key point of Apostolic doctrine. Here, as well as some other places, it is seen in prophecy, which, by its very nature, is not as specific as the declaration of the fulfillment of the prophecy. The fulfillment of the prophetic word is what Peter referred to as “a more sure word of prophecy,” KJV or “the prophetic word confirmed” NKJV (2 Pet 1:19). It is to our advantage to acquaint ourselves with the ascension of Jesus. Once again, this is the point at which He “came” “with the clouds of heaven,” and “unto the Ancient of Days.”

In Prophecy

The Psalms contain allusions to the ascension of Christ. The immediate use of this language applies to the return of the ark of the Covenant. However, it was a foreshadow of the return of the conquering Savior to heaven.

- “God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet” (Psa 47:5).
- “Thou hast ascended on high , thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them” (Psa 68:18). This passage is quoted in the book of Ephesians, where the ascension of a victorious Christ is declared (4:8-9).
- The twenty-fourth Psalm contains an especially vivid picture of the ascension of Christ. “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in . Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah” (Psa 24:8-10). In this Psalm we have a Man, for the first time , entering into the very presence of the throne of glory. It provides a most glorious picture of the returning Conqueror with the spoils of warfare, having soundly defeating the foe..

In the Gospels

- “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven , and sat on the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19).
- “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory ?” (Luke 24:26).

- “And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50-51).
- “What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?” (John 6:62).
- “Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me ” (John 7:33).
- “In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2).
- “Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away , and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father : for my Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).
- “But now I go my way to Him that sent me ; and none of you asketh Me Whither goest Thou?” (John 16:5).
- “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away , the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart , I will send Him unto you” (John 16:7).
- “Of righteousness, because I go to My Father , and ye see Me no more” (John 16:10).
- “A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father ” (John 16:16).
- “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father ” (John 16:28).
- “Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father , and your Father; and to My God, and your God” (John 20:17).

Apostolic Doctrine

- “And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight . And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up , behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven , shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven ” (Acts 1:11).

- “ Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21).
- “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set him at His own right hand in the heavenly places ” (Eph 1:20).
- “Wherefore he saith, When He ascended up on high , He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended , what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things” (Eph 4:9-10).
- “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory ” (1 Tim 3:16).
- “Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ” (Heb 1:3).
- “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens , Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession” (Heb 4:14).
- “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself , now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24).
- “And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God , and to his throne” (Rev 12:5).

All of these are a depiction of the Lord coming on the clouds, as it were, into heaven. Daniel saw it nearly 600 years before it occurred. This was unquestionable evidence that Daniel was especially precious to the God of heaven. Three times Daniel is referred to as “greatly beloved” of God. I will tell you that no other kind of person would have been vouchsafed such precious insights! Those who live close to the Lord get more, as is confirmed in the prophet Daniel, to say nothing of the Apostles’ like Paul and John.

THEY BROUGHT HIM

“ . . . and they brought Him near before Him.” Other versions read, “and was presented before Him,” NASB “was led into His presence,” NIV and “He reached the Ancient of Days and was presented to Him.” TNK This is a characterization of the risen Savior returning to the One who sent Him on a mission determined from the foundation of the world.

Returning to the One Who Sent Him

At this point, we know more of the One Daniel sees than he himself knew. This is only because “the Son of man” is the subject of Divine illumination and proclamation through the Apostles. Thus, we are seeing Jesus “presented” to the Father, or “Ancient of days,” as One returning from the fulfillment of God’s commission.

In the Gospels, Jesus refers to the Father SENDING HIM no less than thirty-eight times (Matt 10:40; Mk 9:37; Lk 4:18; 9:48; 10:16; John 4:34; 5:24, 30,36,37; 6:38,39,40,44,57; 7:16,28,29,33; 8:16,18,26,29,42;9:4; 11:42; 12:44,45,49; 13:20; 14:24; 15:21; 16:5; 17:18,21 ,23,25; 20:21). It is good for us to ponder that commission for a moment, for much is said about it.

- **THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD.** “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world ” (1 John 4:14).
- **A PROPITIATION FOR SIN.** “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins ” (1 John 4:10).
- **THAT WE MIGHT LIVE.** “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him ” (1 John 4:9).”
- **TO REDEEM THE CONDEMNED, AND ENABLE THEIR ADOPTION.** “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ” (Gal 4:4-5).
- **DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.** “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil ” (1 John 3:8).
- **DESTROY THE DEVIL AND LIBERATE THE CAPTIVES.** “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death , that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb 2:15).
- **TAKE AWAY OUR SINS.** “And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins ; and in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5).
- **PUT AWAY SIN.** “For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb

- **DO GOD’S WILL, TAKE AWAY THE OLD COVENANT, AND ESTABLISH THE NEW COVENANT.** “Wherefore when He cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared Me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do Thy will , O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second ” (Heb 10:5-9).
- **TO SAVE SINNERS.** “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim 1:15).
- **BEAR WITNESS TO THE TRUTH.** “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth . Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice” (John 18:37).
- **ACCOMPLISH HIS DECEASE.** “And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem ” (Luke 9:31).
- **DO GOD’S WILL AND FINISH HIS WORK.** “Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work” (John 4:34).
- **HEAL, PREACH, RECOVER, AND SET AT LIBERTY.** “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord” (Luke 4:19).

As the “Son of man” is brought to the Father, He comes as one who has fulfilled every joy and tittle of His staggering commission. He has taken away the sins of the world, dashed the foe to the ground, liberated the captives, and given the people a glimpse of the Father and His will.

He has thrown open the door of hope, demonstrated Divine power by putting the devil and his hosts to flight, and brought in ever lasting righteousness. Sin has been put away, the world has been reconciled to God, and the time of Divine acceptance has been announced. Special messengers have been prepared, death has been defeated, and an acceptable and effective sacrifice for sin has been offered.

Now God can be both “Just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). Now, for the first time since the fall of man, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa 85:10).

We should expect, therefore, for significant things to take place upon the return of the conquering Savior – the “Son of man.”

WHAT THE SON OF MAN RECEIVED

“ 14a And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom . . . ”

Because there has been such corruption of this glorious text, I again want to emphasize this is a declaration of something taking place in heaven. This is the result of the “Son of man” being presented to the “Ancient of days,” the “God of heaven.” This is not the chronicling of an earthly, or fleshly, kingdom. The vision has to do with the exaltation and enthronement of Jesus, a matter declared and emphasized in Apostolic doctrine. I fear that a considerable amount of contrived theology regarding this text reveals earth-mindedness rather than Divine purpose. This is a condition that must be avoided at all cost.

When speaking about accomplishments and issues relating directly to Christ Jesus, there is no latitude allowed for error. If the Gospel, or good news, of Christ is God’s “power unto salvation” (Rom 1:16), improper presentations of Him cannot be allowed , for God does not bless through error, or work through vain imaginations. One will search the Scriptures in vain for the slightest hint that God is tolerant to any degree of those who misrepresent His Son. Our salvation is hinged to our faith in Christ. We simply cannot be wrong about Him. While it may seem totally unnecessary to say this, we live in a religious climate that demands that this point be repeatedly affirmed.

HE WAS GIVEN DOMINION

“And there was given Him dominion . . . ” Other versions read, “He was given authority,” NIV “to Him was given authority,” BBE “and He gave Him power,” DOUAY “and He gave Him dominion,” GNV and “on Him was conferred rule.” NJB

Here Daniel is given to behold more precisely what was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in his first dream. “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom , which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan 2:44). This kingdom was “set up” when “the Son of man” was invested with authority and dominion, as declared in this text.

Let it be clear that the Word, prior to His incarnation, was not without power and authority. Nor, indeed, was He without it when He walked among men. Frequently He exhibited His power and authority in healing diseases, expelling demons, stilling the sea, calming storms, withering fig trees, calling for a fish to deliver a coin, etc., etc. He also had “power on earth to forgive sins” (Matt 9:6). However, that is not the power of which our text speaks.

The power, authority, or dominion, delivered to “the Son of man”

was nothing less than laying the government upon His shoulder. Thus He was given “power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou (the Father) hast given [to] Him” (John 17:2).

He is given this power in the capacity of a Man – “the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5). Not only was the Word required to become a Man in order to pay the penalty for sin, He also had to be a Man, or “the Son of man,” in order to effectively intercede for them and bring them all the way to glory (Heb 2:10).

Declared by the Prophets

The prophets declared an authoritative Savior – One that would be given dominion.

- **A KING SHALL REIGN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.** “Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment” (Isa 32:1).
- **A KING THAT IS IN PLACE.** “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel” (Psa 2:9).
- **DOMINION FROM SEA TO SEA.** “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth” (Psa 72:8).
- **RULING IN THE MIDST OF HIS ENEMIES.** “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies ” (Psa 110:2).
- **THE GOVERNMENT IS UPON HIS SHOULDER.** “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to

order it , and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isa 9:7).

- **HE WILL OPEN AND SHUT.** “And the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder; so He shall open , and none shall shut; and He shall shut , and none shall open” (Isa 22:22).
- **A SAVIOR THAT REIGNS.** “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! ” (Isa 52:7).
- **REIGN AND PROSPER.** “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper , and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth” (Jer 23:5).

Jesus Declared This Dominion

The Lord Jesus spoke of this power while upon earth. His works confirmed the nature of that power. His words provided assurance that it would be devoted to the execution of the will of His Father and the salvation of men.

- **ALL POWER IN HEAVEN AND EARTH.** “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Mat 28:18).
- **POWER OVER ALL FLESH.** “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” (John 17:2).
- **ALL THINGS DELIVERED TO HIM.** “ All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Mat 11:27). “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand ” (John 3:35).
- **ALL JUDGMENT GIVEN TO HIM.** “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son ” (John 5:22). “And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man” (John 5:27).

Apostolic Declarations

What Daniel saw briefly in a vision of the night, the Apostles expounded extensively, confirming Jesus has been exalted and invested with all power . The conferment of this power, authority, or

dominion, is the consequence of Him finishing the work God gave Him to do upon the earth. That work was laying His life down, and taking it up again.

- **SEATED AT GOD’S RIGHT HAND.** “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God ” (Mark 16:19).
- **AUTHORITIES AND POWERS MADE SUBJECT TO HIM.** “Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him ” (1 Pet 3:22).
- **FAR ABOVE ALL PRINCIPALITY AND POWER.** “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion , and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Eph 1:19-21).
- **HIGHLY EXALTED.** “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him , and given Him a name which is above every name : That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11).
- **HE HAS THE PREEMINENCE.** “And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence . For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell” (Col 1:19).
- **EXALTED TO GIVE REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS.** “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31).
- **MADE SO MUCH BETTER.** “Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Heb 1:3-4).
- **BOTH LORD AND CHRIST.** “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ ” (Acts 2:36).
- **MADE HIGHER THAN THE HEAVENS.** “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens ” (Heb 7:26).

Dominion Associated with Salvation

It is imperative that we see the dominion of “the Son of man” in its relationship to the salvation of mankind. The rule of Deity over all opposing forces, whether human or evil spirits, has never been questioned. The rule of Deity is absolutely uncontested, and has always been. The God of heaven has always raised up and deposed kings and kingdoms at will. There is not a solitary instance in all of revealed history where the enemies of God engaged in an extended initiative against the God of heaven. It has always been true, “the heavens do rule” (Dan 4:26).

Our text is not about the God of heaven ruling. Rather, it is about “the Son of man” ruling – the glorified “Man Christ Jesus” being given dominion (1 Tim 2:5).

Although Christ’s dominion involves the total public subjugation of His enemies, the last of which is death (1 Cor 15:26), it is primarily associated with salvation . Our deliverance from sin had to come from a man – a member of our own race. We must be kept safe by a Man , thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah: “And a Man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa 32:2). The Divine resources required to make it safely from earth to glory must be ministered to us by a Man , who mediates the covenant (Heb 9:15), and ever lives to make intercession for us (Heb 7:25).

Daniel is being given to see the Savior after He has been exalted . He is beholding what is required to bring the sons to glory, and bring men to God (1 Pet 3:18). Jesus did not have to be exalted to subdue God’s enemies. Michael and his angels could easily do that. The exaltation of Jesus was required in order that eternal benefits might pass from God to man. It was necessary in order that the effects of Satan’s destruction and the spoiling of principalities and powers might be realized by redeemed men.

While this may seem quite apparent, a significant amount of contemporary theology appears to ignore these facts. Men are brought to consider Jesus primarily as a Subjugator of our enemies. However, before the Word became flesh, He possessed such power. The “Son of man” is primarily a Savior. That is why He was sent into the world, and that is why He has been enthroned in heaven, being given unquestionable dominion.

HE WAS GIVEN GLORY

“And there was given Him . . . glory . . .” In Jesus “power and glory” have been brought together in the fullest and most extensive way. “Glory” has to do with honor, or recognition. Presently, the glory of “the Son of man” is fully beheld in heaven, where He is seated at the Father’s right hand. No heavenly personality has any doubts about the glorification of Jesus. Nor, indeed, is there any ignorance of it among the hosts of darkness who were all decimated by Him in His death on the cross (Heb 2:14; Col 2:15). It is only upon earth that Jesus is not seen in all of His glory. Therefore, it is declared to us , in order that we may grasp something of its magnitude by faith.

- “Who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory ; that your faith and hope might be in God” (1 Pet 1:21).
- “Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow ” (1 Pet 1:11).
- “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor ; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb 2:9). Here we see that Christ was made lower than the angels in order to die, but crowned with glory and honor in order that His death might be effectual for all men. Thus the glory, which He received after His death, validated that death for all who will believe.
- “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus ; whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate, when He was determined to let Him go” (Acts 3:13).

The glory with which Jesus is presently endued was given to Him when He returned to heaven, having completed His mission in the world. It was in answer to His own prayer on the eve of His betrayal: “And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was ” (John 17:5). That very glory will be openly displayed “when He shall come in His own glory” (Luke 9:26).

Once again, let it be clear that this glory is necessary for us to be saved . An un-glorified Christ could not save us – His death and resurrection notwithstanding. The glory given to “the Son of man” sanctified His death, resurrection, and intercession. Also, He was glorified as a man – “THE Man Christ Jesus,” and “the Second Man” (1 Cor 15:47). Now this glorified Man is our official Representative, and the Pledge that all who believe on Him will finally be with Him, also appearing “with Him in glory” (Col 3:4).

HE WAS GIVEN A KINGDOM

“And there was given Him . . . a kingdom . . .” Other versions read, “sovereign power,” NIV “kingship,” NRSV “THE kingdom,” Septuagint and “royal power.” NLT

Once again, I must emphasize that this is related to “the Son of man” being brought to the Father – not with Him coming back to the earth! It has to do with His return to heaven, not His return to earth. Daniel is being given to see the impact of Christ’s vicarious death in heaven, not the impact of His glorious coming among men.

The kingdom given to Jesus commenced with His return to the glory -- starting with His glorification and consequent enthronement at the right hand of God as “the Man Christ Jesus.”

Peter’s Exposition of this Truth

Peter alluded to this when He declared God had “made” Jesus “both Lord and Christ.” His reasoning is unusually powerful, shattering misconceptions of the nature of the salvation and Divine rule. Peter spoke these words on the day of Pentecost when He was “filled with the Spirit.”

First, He affirmed God had made promises regarded a coming Sovereign – the “Lord.” “For David speaketh concerning Him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is on my right hand, that I should not be moved . . . For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord , Sit thou on My right hand” (Acts 2:25,34). Secondly, Peter announced the coming of a Christ, or Messiah, that would be enthroned. “Therefore [David] being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He [God] would raise up Christ to sit on His throne” (Acts 2:30).

Inspired by the Holy Spirit to see the Scriptures with clarity, Peter goes on to relate all of this to the resurrection of Christ. “He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ , that His soul was not left in hell [hades] , NKJV neither His flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:31).

Confirming that the resurrection of Christ did, in fact, include His ascension and enthronement in glory, Peter further declared, “Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God , and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens , but he says himself: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ ” (Acts 2:33-36). NKJV

Therefore, Jesus is presently sitting at the right hand of God in the capacity of the reigning “Lord.” He is presently the “Christ” God promised David He would seat upon his throne. This was one of the very first things proclaimed about the Lord Jesus. It ought not be so little known among those who claim identity with Him. The glorified Christ has received a kingdom!

The Apostles refer to this kingdom – the one “the Son of man” has received.

- It is called “the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph 5:5).
- It is “the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ” (2 Pet 1:11).
- When in exile on Patmos, John referred to himself as “your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ ” (Rev 1:9).
- Our own reconciliation to God is described as the work of God, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son ” (Col 1:13).

- The Spirit represents the Father as saying to the glorified Son, “ Thy throne , O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom ” (Heb 1:8).
- In one of His parables, Jesus likened the kingdom of God to “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom , and to return” (Luke 19:12).
- Jesus will judge the living and the dead when He AND His kingdom appear. “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom ” (2 Tim 4:1).

At this present time, the Lord Jesus is ruling and reigning. The government is now upon His shoulder (Isa 9:6), and He is reigning in righteousness (Isa 32:1). From the earthly perspective, however, this does not appear to be true. It seems as though Jesus is not really reigning, for things do not appear to fall out to the apparent advantage of the saints. Thus foolish people become “upset with God,” or “angry with God,” supposing they have become the victims of happenstance or uncontrollable forces of evil. Notwithstanding, Daniel saw “the Son of man” receiving a kingdom, and Peter and Paul both affirmed that kingdom is now in place. The only thing that remains is for Christ’s rule and kingdom to be made known, or revealed.

God Will Reveal Him

The Spirit informs us that God has determined to openly display His Son in all of His glory. While men may doubt His exaltation now, no one will doubt it then. Thus it is written, “that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing , which He [God the Father] will manifest in His own time, He who IS the blessed and only Potentate , the King of kings and Lord of lords , who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power . Amen” (1 Tim 6:16). NKJV

Who is the person willing to affirm Jesus is not presently “blessed?” Is there an individual who will stand up and say Christ is not presently “the only Potentate,” or all-powerful One? Will anyone dare to say He is not at this present time “King of kings and Lord of lords?” Is He not deserving of “honor and everlasting power” right now? All of that is another way of saying He has been “given a kingdom.”

The “Son of man” receiving a kingdom is referred to by Jesus Himself when speaking to the church at Laodicea. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne ” (Rev 3:21). When Jesus was seated with His Father in His throne, He was “given a kingdom.” At that point He received the reins of the kingdom in order to bring the sons home to glory – and Daniel was given to see it.

THE EXTENT OF HIS DOMINION

“ 14b that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him . . . ”

Now Daniel is told of the marvelous extent of the kingdom given to “the Son of man.”

SHOULD SERVE HIM

“ . . . should serve Him . . . ” Other versions read, “ might serve Him,” NASB “ Worshiped Him,” NIV “ were His servants,” BBE “ shall serve Him,” DOUAY “ became His servants,” NJB “ would obey Him,” NLT “ must serve Him,” TNK and “ do serve Him.” YLT

Thus, considering the various translations, and from a linguistic point of view, a number of views are possible. The “Son of man” received “dominion, glory, and a kingdom,” in order that:

- All people should, or ought, to serve Him.
- The result would be that all people worshiped Him.
- The result would be that everyone will eventually become His servants.
- All people would, indeed, serve Him.
- It would become an obligation to serve Him.

While men will be tempted to do so, they must avoid philosophizing about the glorification of Christ, as well Him being served by all.

First. Those who are not in Christ are “not a people” (1 Pet 2:10). Hence, the legitimacy of all peoples, nations, and languages is owing to the remnant who have believed through grace. In this sense, believers are the “salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13). From this perspective, the glorified Christ is being served by Divinely recognized people “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9). That sanctified remnant brings genuineness to the various visions of humanity.

Second. A comparison is being made between the temporal global kingdoms of the world (Babylon, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman) and the kingdom given to Christ. In a fuller and more extensive

way, “all people, nations, and languages” serve Him – as compared with Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, etc., each of whom all nations also served. In this case, the emphasis is on “HIM” – the “Son of man.”

In this sense it was said of Nebuchadnezzar , “all people, nations, and languages , trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down” (Dan 5:19). Also, when Darius wrote to his subjects he addressed them as “all people, nations, and languages , that dwell in all the earth” (Dan 6:25). When Cyrus addressed his subjects he confessed, “All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me” (2 Chr 36:23).

In this view, the language is that of universal dominion and power , where the ruler does his will, governing the world with his interests in mind. This is certainly true of the Lord Jesus, who presently has, and is using, “all power in heaven and in earth.”

Third. Because Jesus has, in fact, received all power in heaven and on earth, and the government is upon His shoulder, ONLY His interests are truly being served . Whether men are aware of it or not, He is the Governor of the nations, and “all people, nations, and languages” are actually serving Him.

Jesus often spoke of His kingdom in this manner, showing that all men are involved in the heavenly kingdom, whether they know it or not . Thus, He said “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away” (Mat 13:47-48). Those likened to “bad” fish were in the net . That is, they were serving a Divine purpose, just as surely as Pharaoh was – even though they were eventually discarded.

The same perspective is given in the parable of “the tares of the field.” They were in God’s field , and were allowed to remain there until the end. They were ignorant of it, but they were serving Divine objectives, even though they were seeking their own.

Other parables highlighting this aspect of the Kingdom over which Jesus now presides include the talents (Matt 25:15-28), pounds (Luke 19:13-25), and wise and foolish virgins (Matt 25:1-13). In each of them the righteous and unrighteous were involved , the good and the evil, the saved and the lost. All of them were, in the broad sense, within the Kingdom – some accepted like Moses, and others rejected like Pharaoh.

In this regard, no persons live unto themselves, or purely for their own interests and objectives. As it is written, “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself” (Rom 14:7). This passage has particular regard to our relation to other people. Thus the Basic Bible English Version reads, “For every man's life and every man's death has a relation to others as well as to himself.” If that is true of

our peers, much more it is true of the One who created and redeemed us! Thus the New Living Translation reads, “For we are not our own masters when we live or when we die.”

If a person can rise high enough, everything is of God, through God, and to God (Rom 11:36). Now that God has turned the government over to the Son, whether men acknowledge it or not, they are serving Christ’s interests – either to their own salvation or condemnation.

Fourth. Because of the dominion, glory, and kingdom that have been given to “the Son of man,” it is the obligation all people, nations, and languages to serve Him. Should men refuse to do so, they will still be governed by Him, and will give a strict account to Him. Prior to Christ, God Almighty declared “all souls are Mine” (Ezek 18:4). God will excuse no person who does not willingly serve the “Son of man.”

Serving the Son of man is to the advantage of the individual when it is done willingly, and without the imposition of Divine power. Egypt served God when they gave their wealth to departing Israel (Ex 3:22; 12:36; Psa 105:37). However, it brought no benefit to them, for they did not do it willingly. It took the death of the firstborn of all the houses in Egypt to move them to give their goods to Israel. When Jesus was put to death, those who did it, in a very real sense, were serving God, for they did “whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done ” (Acts 4:28). However, it brought no advantage to them, for they had no thought of serving God.

However, when the power of salvation is experienced by a person, willingness becomes the hallmark of his service to Christ Jesus. As it is written, “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power” (Psa 110:3).

Fifth. Eventually, and in an evident way, all peoples will be shown as subjects of Christ. Thus the Scriptures declare a time when “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

Again, in the song of Moses and of the Lamb, the redeemed sang, “Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest” (Rev 15:4).

These texts specifically have to do with the overthrow of the enemies of Christ – when His enemies are made His “footstool” (Heb 1:13), and He has “put down all rule and all authority AND POWER” (1 Cor 15:24).

The point of our text is that until the appointed overthrow of these powers, all nations, peoples,

and languages are not continuing because of their own self-will. It is not that they are strong, and it will take two-thousand or more years for the Lord to put them down, or make them His footstool. They are continuing under His government, even though they are largely ignorant of that circumstance. They are clay in His hand, and He is shaping them for His own purposes, even though they do not know it. Things are not out of control!

This is no strange teaching, but is confirmed elsewhere in Scripture. It is this very circumstance to which the seventy-sixth Psalm refers: “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee : the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain ” (Psa 76:10). This principle was seen in the conspiracy of Joseph’s brothers against him. They worked their will against him, throwing him in a pit, and selling him to a band of Ishmaelites. Yet, when all was said and done, “ God meant it unto good , to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gen 50:20). They actually were serving God, even though driven by their personal hatred of Joseph.

Other Prophecies

This certainly is not the only prophecy of all nations and peoples serving the Lord Jesus Christ – “the Son of man.” One of the premier declarations of their subjugation is found in the second Psalm. “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him” (Psa 2:10-12). Paul clearly affirmed this Psalm was speaking of the risen Christ (Acts 13:33).

Also, the seventy-second Psalm speaks of the Messiah in a veiled, yet poignant, manner. “Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve him” (Psa 72:11).

The Point of the Text

The point of our text is that commensurate with Christ’s exaltation and enthronement the whole world was made subject to Him . There is no place on this earth over which He does not preside, or where His interests are not being served. This circumstance began with Christ’s enthronement in heaven, and will continue until the end of time. If He faces His enemies, they are used to serve His purpose, like Joseph’s brothers, Pharaoh, Judas Pilate, and Herod. If they are heathen kingdoms, they serve Him in the same way as Babylon, the Medo-Persians, Greece, and Rome. He is at the helm of the Kingdom, and blessed are the people who know it.

This government, and the service of all peoples, is with the saints in mind . Jesus is presiding over the world in order to bring the saints home to glory. He is ensuring that all things are worked together for their ultimate good (Rom 8:28). His rule guarantees we will not be tempted above our ability, and that a way of escape will accompany every temptation (1 Cor 10:13). His reign is why we continue to enjoy all things that “pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3), and are “more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Rom 8:37).

At this time, men may argue about this subjugation, or imagine that it does not exist. However, God has appointed a day when He will unveil this entire circumstance, making His Son known in the capacity He presently occupies . Thus it is written, “Which in His times He shall show, who IS the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only HATH immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom BE honor and power everlasting. Amen” (1 Tim 6:15-16).

It must be remembered that Christ’s kingdom is “not of this world” (John 18:36). That is, it is not readily apparent to the flesh. Yet, it is a very real kingdom, a very real rule, and involves very real subjugation and service. It does require more wisdom and power to rule over tyrants, while using them to fulfill Divine purpose. After all, every “great house” has two kinds of vessels: “some of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for noble purposes and some for ignoble ” NIV (2 Tim 2:20). Just as those vessels serve the householder, “all people, nations, and languages” are now serving the exalted Christ.

ALL PEOPLE

“ . . . that all people . . . should serve Him . . . ” The word “people” views humanity from the ethnic point of view – those with a common origin .

The most general view of “people,” or “peoples,” views humanity as springing from a single source – Adam. “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth” (Acts 17:26).

A more restricted view traces everyone back to the sons of Noah. “The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth” (Gen 9:19).

Other people groups specified by Scripture are the descendants of Abraham (Gen 17:5), Ishmael (Gen 25:16), Esau (Deut 2:4), etc.

ALL NATIONS

“ . . . that all . . . nations . . . should serve Him . . . ” The term “nations” views humanity from a political and geographic point of view . The offspring of a progenitor may be scattered throughout the world. A nation remains grouped together. This circumstance allowed for the judging of the nation of Israel to be distinct, for they were (as a nation) “scattered” among other nations (Esth 3:8; Psa 44:11; Zech 7:14). Yet, they remained a people, even though dispersed among the nations. Thus, according to Divine appointment, they became “an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD ” led them (Deu 28:37).

ALL LANGUAGES

“ . . . that all . . . languages, should serve Him . . . ” The expression “languages” views humanity from the standpoint of their speech, or means of communication . A “people,” for example, may be divided in their language. This can also be true of a nation. One language can be embraced by several different people groups, or several different nations.

THE REMARKABLE CIRCUMSTANCE

Thus, from every vantage point, the “Son of man” is being served by humanity. The descendants of every progenitor are under His rule. Every government and every continent are embraced by His kingdom. All languages, whether crude or refined, are within His domain. There is no place where Jesus does not rule. There are no people that are not governed by Him. There are no nations, governments, or land-masses that are not subservient to Him. There is no language that is not under His control.

What Does This Mean?

The implications of this are staggering to consider. This means wherever a person seeks the Lord, regardless of the people group to which that person belongs, God will be found. It means that any individual that seeks the Lord, regardless of the government under which he lives, or the continent in which he resides, will find Him. It means that any male or female, young or old, bond or free, that reaches out for God, regardless of the seeming barriers of language, will find Him.

If that seems too difficult to receive, sift it through the words of the Sovereign Himself. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened ” (Mat 7:7-8). Weigh it in the balance of the truth revealed in Paul’s Athenian discourse. “From one man He made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and He determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him , though He is not far from each one of us. For in Him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are His offspring” NIV (Acts 17:26-28).

If “the Son of man” was not reigning over all people, nations, and languages, no one could be saved. In such a case, a quest for the Lord could be frustrated, and reconciliation to God would be rendered impossible. If that is not true, then men are able to overcome evil forces that on their own that have held the world captive for centuries. Such a postulate is too foolish to embrace.

This is precisely why the government has been placed upon Christ’s shoulders! That is why all peoples, nations, and languages serve Him. It is in order for Him to bring “many sons to glory” (Heb 2:10). For that to be accomplished we needed a Man in heaven who had passed through this valley of tears, and gained the victory. We needed a Representative in heaven to whom every personality is subject, who can get Divine resources to us and subdue our enemies – One who is able to be touched with the feelings of our weaknesses. We needed One to whom Satan and his hosts are subject. We required One whom the Father honored, and to whom He listens. We had to have a Man next to God who has, in

fact, received all power in heaven and earth! By the grace of God, we have such an One – praise the Lord! It is the glorified Christ whom Daniel saw!

THE DURATION OF HIS KINGDOM

“ 14c His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

One of the primary purposes of “all Scripture” is “that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” NKJV (2 Tim 3:17). No word of Scripture is the mere statement or commentary of a man. No word of God is a lifeless account of history, a mere human biography, or the recollection of mortal man. There is purpose in Scripture, and intention in revelation. That purpose or intention is not to ensure we obtain all of the facts, or have an exact and thorough view of history. Although, to be sure, such things are involved, they are not the paramount reason for the Word of God.

The aim of the inspiration of God, and the moving of holy men by the Holy Spirit, is to stabilize the children of God – those who are in Christ Jesus. It is to make their faith strong, ensure the validity and power of their hope, and increase their joy in the Lord. If we read the Word of God without these objectives in mind, we will inevitably be drawn into fruitless bypaths.

If this is not seen, scholarship becomes a thief and a robber, and history is reduced to a mere distraction. One of the great disservices of contemporary Christian education is that is sorely lacking in an emphasis of Divine objectives. The Bible is too often viewed as a compilation of facts, rules, and proof texts, without due regard for what God is actually accomplishing through Scripture. Such an approach allows for the assignment of too much value to academic pundits who have little or no expertise in the things of the Kingdom. Such people have no rank in God’s Kingdom!

The text before us is one in which Divine objectives must be seen. These things “were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope ” (Rom 15:4). Thus Daniel is given a view of the Messiah that will be of incalculable benefit to succeeding generations of believers. He will be shown things that bear directly upon the faith and hope of those in Christ Jesus. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Daniel will now confirm the solidity of our hope, assuring our hearts that, by grace, we have become part of a glorious Kingdom that will never end. In perfect harmony, it will blend with the eternity toward which everything is moving by Divine appointment.

HIS DOMINION

“His dominion . . .” Other versions read, “His authority,” BBE “His power,” DOUAY and “His rule.” NJB This is the “dominion” that was given to Him upon His triumphant return to heaven (14a). A “dominion” is an empire, or area over which the sovereign rules. We have already been told this area includes “all people, nations, and languages.” The Gospel message informs us it includes the heavenly host and demonic hosts as well (Matt 28:18; 2 Pet 3:22).

This is “HIS” dominion! It was given to Him because of His exploits – because He fulfilled the Father’s commission – a commission that would throw open “the door of faith” (Acts 14:27), and usher in “the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2).

This dominion, power, or authority already belongs to Him. It is not something He is going to receive, but what He presently possesses. It is a “dominion,” and will grind to powder all competing governments – just as surely as it has already decimated the four beastly governments that rose from agitated and fomenting society.

AN EVERLASTING DOMINION

“. . . is an everlasting dominion . . .” Other versions read, “eternal authority,” BBE “everlasting power,” DOUAY “everlasting rule,” NJB “His rule is eternal,” NLT and “a dominion age-enduring.” YLT

Nothing can interrupt this rule, stop the Divine time-clock, or interfere with Christ’s dominion. Since the “Son of man” has been given the Kingdom, there has never been a period of time when it was not dominant. The Kingdom did not begin with Christ’s exaltation, but was given to Him at that time. It was already in existence, for God has never been without a kingdom. This Kingdom will outlast both the world and time.

This is the same kingdom of which the Psalmist spoke. “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations” (Psa 145:13). That very kingdom has not been given to “the Man Christ Jesus,” and it remains everlasting.

It is the one of which Peter wrote. “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:11). Peter means we will be inducted into this kingdom in the fullest sense, with no vestiges of mortality or the curse remaining with us, as they do at this present time. We are now in that Kingdom (Col 1:13), but not in the fullest sense. There remains a part of us that is now within the control of that Kingdom, but cannot enter into it – namely “flesh and blood” (1 Cor 15:50). Yet, even that part is under the Lord’s dominion, and in His power can be subdued and brought under subjection (1 Cor 9:27).

HIS DOMINION WILL NOT PASS AWAY

“ . . . which shall not pass away . . . ” Other versions read, “which will not come to an end,” BBE “that shall not be taken away,” DOUAY and “it will never end.” NLT

Dominion was given to the lion-like kingdom of Babylon – but it was taken away . Power was given to the bear-like Persian empire – but it was taken away . Authority was given to the leopard-like kingdom of Greece – but it was taken away . Dominance was given to the ruthless beastly empire of Rome – but it was taken away . What of this Kingdom – the one that God “set up” in the days of those ancient, and now defunct, global powers? The answer: “it will NEVER end!” NLT

HIS KINGDOM SHALL NOT BE DESTROYED

“ . . . and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Other versions read, “that will never be destroyed,” NIV “which will not come to destruction,” BBE and “His kingship will never come to an end.” NJB

Some of the versions are a bit confusing on this verse. The words “come to an end” do not convey the real meaning of “destroyed.” “Come to an end” can refer to something passing away simply because of time or age – like mortality. Death, for example, is not necessarily a destruction, as it was during the flood. In this verse, the “destruction” is more Divine judgment than the termination of a government by another government.

Each of the four preceding governments were judged by God. He raised them up, and He put them down. However, the Kingdom given to the “Son of man” will never be put down by God – and He is the only One who can put a kingdom down. This Kingdom will never be renounced by Him, or give way to another kingdom of His own appointment. This is the final global kingdom , some theologies notwithstanding. It will not compete with other kingdoms, but will instead put them all down with finality.

It is true that, after “the end,” Jesus will “deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.” Then, “when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:24-28). However, this will be the very same Kingdom that was delivered to Him when He returned to heaven leading “captivity captive” (Eph 4:8) .

The Presence of the Saints

As will be later confirmed, all of this presupposes the presence of the people of God in the world until it passes away . The reason for this is simply that “the Son of man” is governing the world with their interest in mind, and to bring them to glory. There is no reason for the world apart from the saints of God. The world is God’s “field,” made for His wheat, and not for tares. In this sense, the children of the wicked one are the intruders – the ones that do not belong. Hence, they are the ones who will be

“gathered first,” as the holy angels, upon command from the King, will “gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and then which do iniquity” (Matt 13:37-41).

Those who teach the saints will be removed from the world in a secret rapture, leaving it with only the wicked who will be oppressed by a fierce earthly ruler, have demeaned the Lord’s Christ. They have wholly misrepresented both God and His Purpose, His Son and His Kingdom. They have an improper view of the world, the redeemed, and the Redeemer.

CONCLUSION

The significance of the Son of God has been introduced to Daniel. Although nearly six centuries would pass before He entered into the world as the Word made flesh, yet a most remarkable revelation of Him is vouchsafed to this faithful prophet. He is the One for whom the government of God is reserved, and in whose hand the will of the Lord will “prosper” (Isa 53:10). All other kings and kingdoms are only temporary. The world was not made by them or for them. While they were employed in the purpose of God, that purpose did not center in them. The heart and core of the heavenly Kingdom finds its clarity and realization in the Person of Jesus Christ – “the Son of man.”

The Lord revealed to Daniel the rise of ruthless and world-dominating kingdoms. But He did not end there. He made clear that these kingdoms were under Divine control. They did not rise, nor would they fall, apart from Divine intervention.

In order to fix this firmly in the mind of His faithful prophet, the Lord pulled back the curtain to His own throne, showing Daniel the throne from which “the heavens do rule.” That throne has been prepared “for judgment,” and no person, king, or even kingdom, is exempt from the assessment and activity of that throne. The Lord thus turns our attention from the activities and influences of men to the Person and purpose God

Even more has been revealed in our text. From the beginning, God determined that the overthrow of all power, beginning with the devil himself, and concluding in his most lowly vassal, would come from the hands of a man – the “Seed” of the woman (Gen 3:15). That “Seed” has now been witnessed as “one like unto the Son of man.” He is the One to whom all power in heaven and earth was given. He is the One who will subdue all enemies, and bring the children of God safely to their appointed haven of rest.

In the words of the prophet, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged” in this great work (Isa 42:4).

The kingdom over which He now presides will never end. No other kingdom will succeed it. God will never remove it. No competing government – and ALL other governments DO compete against it – will survive the expansion of this glorious Kingdom.

In view of this, the saints of God are to take courage. They are to engage in the good fight of faith, taking advantage of the “good hope and everlasting consolation” that belongs to them in Christ Jesus (2 Thess 2:16). Already, through their faith, the Father has shown them some of the glory of His Son – a glory that will ultimately be displayed to an assembled universe. What we have been given to see will perfectly blend with that appointed full revelation. When we see Christ Jesus “as He is,” it will be perfectly harmonious with what we have seen thus far. The perceptions of faith will be in full accord with what we see “face to face” (1 Cor 13:12). The glory we have beheld now is the introduction to the glory that will be seen then. Presently, we are witnessing the periphery of that glory. Then, we will see the effulgence of it.

If such marvelous revelations ministered comfort to Daniel in Babylon, much more will they do so to those who “are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1; 1 Pet 5:14). You have every reason to expect the overthrow of all evil. You also are now able to anticipate beholding Jesus in all of His glory, with nothing to distract you!

The Prophecy of Daniel

AN EXPLANATION OF THE VISION IS GIVEN, #1

Lesson #22

INTRODUCTION

In the first year of Belshazzar's reign, when the dignitaries of Babylon had apparently forgotten Daniel (5:11), God remembered him . The Lord does not forget His own, but His eye is ever upon them. As it is written, "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry" (Psa 34:15).

This Divine posture, however, is not only to protect the saints and provide for them. The favor of God moves Him to unveil His purposes to men, and give them understanding concerning His covenants and determinations. Those whose lives are wrapped up in the here-and-now, by that very condition, forfeit unspeakable insights from heaven. The Lord has a heart to make Himself and His will known to men. As it is written, "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and He will show them His covenant " (Psa 25:14).

In this section of the book, the Lord is unveiling His “secret” to Daniel. He is showing the prophet aspects of the “covenant” centered in Christ that precious few souls have ever been given to see.

LIVING IN THE WRONG PLACE

This is a marvelous principle of God’s dealings with men, and we do well to extend ourselves to apprehend it. When men focus on the temporal aspects of life, they are forced to live in a domain in which manna from heaven does not fall.

The basic rudiments of life can become a distraction to men. Jesus spoke of these things in this way. “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat , or what ye shall drink ; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on . Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” (Mat 6:25). There are less fortunate people in this world for whom these things are not sure from day to day. For them, these concerns can be distractions, causing the soul to be unaware of “spiritual blessings in heavenly places” (Eph 1:3).

Others, who have no inordinate care for the basic necessities of life are distracted by other matters. Of these things Jesus said, “the cares of this world , and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful” (Mark 4:19).

Still others have been distracted by erroneous religious emphases that have robbed the soul – the “traditions of men.” Although these traditions are most demanding, they bring nothing of substance to the soul. Jesus said to those perpetrating such traditions, “But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men : for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in” (Mat 23:13).

Because these things turn men’s attention away from God, they also deprive them of the benefits of His great love. The contemporary church could improve upon its grasp of these things.

Daniel will be shown great mysteries because of his closeness to the Lord. He is special to the Lord, like the “apple of His eye” (Deut 32:10). Thrice Daniel is told he is “ greatly beloved” in the heavenly realms. Some versions use the expression “highly esteemed,” NASB/NIV “much beloved,” Septuagint “specially chosen,” NJB “God loves you very much,” NLT and “you are precious.” TNK

- “. . . for thou art greatly beloved” (9:23).
- “And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved . . . ” (Dan 10:11)

- “. . . And said, O man greatly beloved . . .” (Dan 10:19)

Now, because of this circumstance, the Lord opens things to Daniel that will occur long after his time . It is as though the Lord’s heart will not let him hide from Daniel what He is going to do. A similar condition existed when the Lord was about to destroy Sodom. Although the destruction could not be averted, He was compelled to reveal to Abraham what He was about to do. As it is written, “And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” (Gen 18:17-18).

I encourage you to extend yourself to be pleasing to the Lord. Do not think this is not possible, for the Spirit admonishes you to do so.

- “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children” (Eph 5:1).
- “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing , being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10).
- “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God , so ye would abound more and more” (1 Thess 4:1).

We are told that God draws near to those who draw near to Him. Things that stand between us and God are to be eliminated from our lives. “Draw nigh to God , and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (James 4:8). Souls experience spiritual poverty simply because of their distance from the Lord, and their distraction by lesser things. This is particularly unacceptable in Christ because the way to God has been opened (Heb 10:20), sin taken away (John 1:29), and everything pertaining to life and godliness supplied (2 Pet 1:3).

REVELATION IN ISOLATION

There is something else to be seen here that is of great value to the believer. Those who are in a state of isolation, or cut off from the benefits of the companionship of many believers, can receive wonderful things from God. Daniel is away from Judah, and has been for many decades. He is cut off from Jerusalem, the city of God. The normalities of Jewish life have not been enjoyed by him for many years. Yet, his love for and grasp of the truth has not deteriorated. God will make known most remarkable things to this man while he is in Babylon – while he is a one of the “captives of Judah” (2:25). A strange land, a heathen government, and opposition by foes cannot stop the flow of revelation to him. He is still precious to God, even when in a foreign land.

This is a principle that is frequently seen in Scripture. Men who stood relatively alone were vouchsafed special insights from the God of heaven. The evil environment in which they found

themselves did no hinder these revelations.

- Enoch. This man lived during the rapid decline of morality that led to the flood. In that time, he was given to prophesy of the coming of the flood, which prophecy was also a depiction of the coming of the Lord. “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him” (Jude 1:14-15).
- Noah. This man lived in the time when God’s patience ran out, and His Spirit ceased to strive with decadent humanity. Yet, God unveiled to him what He was going to do, and spared Noah in the fulfilling of that word. “And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish My covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee” (Gen 6:17-18).
- Abraham. This man’s father was an idolater (Josh 24:2), and he lived in a time when there was no known prophet and no Scripture. Yet, God called him (Gen 12:1-3), and made a covenant with him. “And I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly . . . As for Me, behold, My covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee” (Gen 17:3-5).
- Moses. Living in a time of unusually sparse revelation, and isolated from Egypt in a wilderness, God called Moses (Ex 3:3-8), through him led Israel out of Egypt (Isa 63:11), and became intimate with him. “And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face . . . He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel” (Ex. 33:11; Psa 103:7).
- Ezekiel. While this man was an exile in Babylon, he had visions of God. “Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God” (Ezek 1:1).
- Paul. During the ultimate experience of isolation, which is the time associated with death, this man was wafted into a lofty realm and given to see things no man had ever before seen. “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor 12:2-4).
- John. In an unusual experience of isolation, John was on the Isle of Patmos because he proclaimed the Word of the Lord. On that piece of rock jutting out into the Aegean Sea, Jesus appeared to Him, giving him a revelation for the churches, and a remarkable insight into things to come. “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am

Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia . . . Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter” (Rev 1:10-11,19).

Why Say These Things?

I make these observations because of the times in which we live. There is a sense in which those who put their trust in God are presently in a state of isolation. While there are other believers around us, they are the vast minority of the people. Those who have any measurable degree of an understanding of God and His great salvation are even more rare. And, those committed to maintain that understanding are exceedingly rare. If ever there was a time when Christ’s words, “few there be that find it” (Matt 7:14), were appropriate, it is today. Those who “sigh and cry” because of these conditions (Ezek 9:4) require the comfort that is found in the record of Daniel’s faithfulness, experiences, and blessed stewardship of the truth.

This circumstance has produced at least two unfortunate results. First, it has brought such a level of discouragement to some, that they have withdrawn from the good fight of faith, thinking the whole effort is pointless. Second, others have been moved by the situation to align themselves with dead religion, thinking that some involvement is better than none. As a consequence, their souls are being starved, and they live in a constant state of spiritual frustration.

However, the book of Daniel can prove to be a great encouragement to us in this matter. It is possible in our time to have an unusual and productive fellowship with the Lord. It is possible to receive sustaining insights that invigorate the soul, stabilize the mind, and satisfy the heart. But they will not be found in Babylon’s court, so to speak. There is a sense in which we must withdraw ourselves from “vain tradition,” for until we do, what we receive from God will be sparse, if, indeed, anything at all is received. God will always reward faith, but that faith can neither be developed or sustained apart from fellowship with God.

This is a time when believers are to “awake out of sleep,” knowing the time (Rom 13:11). It is a time to shake the dust of lifeless religion from us (Isa 52:2) , and put on the beautiful garments of salvation (Isa 52:1) . God is still looking for people whose hearts are perfect toward him – people to whom He can entrust marvelous insights, and whose cause He can undergird (2 Chron 16:9). There is no reason why that person cannot be you!

The salvation of God will fully equip you to live in an wicked age, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly “in this present world” (Tit 2:12). That is a most blessed circumstance!

THE IMPACT OF THE VISION ON DANIEL

“ 7:15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.”

There is a certain religious climate that is developed by an academic approach to the Word of God. That climate has robbed many a soul of having sensitive responses to the Word of the Lord. By “sensitive responses,” I mean reactions to the revelation of God such as those Daniel experiences in this text. That involve very strong reactions.

Approaching the Word of God from the standpoint of human wisdom and analysis has opened the door for all manner of harmful initiatives. Some of them include the following.

- Questioning the validity of Scripture – a practice popularized by “higher criticism.” Such people are fond of using terms like “best and oldest manuscripts,” “in the original language it says,” etc. It is not unusual for such people to be more impressed with an archeological find than a Divine affirmation.
- Placing a greater weight upon word tenses and sentence structure than upon Divine affirmation and the message the words carry.
- A tendency to fit Scripture into preconceived theologies and views that have been adopted independently of the Scriptures themselves.
- The inclination to imagine that earthly learning and worldly wisdom give people the advantage in the understanding of Scripture – which approach leaves no place for faith.
- The disposition to leave a deeper understanding of Scripture to the theological “experts,” and those with more advanced learning in language and historical technicalities.
- There is a marked propensity in those approaching Scripture in this manner to not take it as seriously as they should. Such can read of momentous judgments, for example, with little impact upon their spirits. They can be exposed to exceeding great and precious promises, yet take them casually, failing to engage in a fervent quest to obtain them.

Now, all of these may appear quite incidental to the naive, but they are not. Such frames of mind actually disqualify a person from receiving spiritual understanding. They do so because there is no

place for faith in them, or trust in the Living God.

Let no one imagine for a moment that this places a premium upon ignorance, or makes the acquisition of knowledge wrong or unlawful. Daniel himself was a learned man in both language and literature (Dan 1:4). However, those were not the resources upon which he relied when it came to understanding what God had revealed. His worldly learning was his slave, not his master. It was subordinate to his faith, which is the highest form of understanding.

This circumstance is what produced the tender experience of which we now read. It is essential that we understand these are the reactions of faith, not of a hypersensitive man.

The Sureness of the Vision

Daniel senses the sureness of the vision, and that perception is what produces the experiences to which we are now exposed. They have come from understanding, not fear. They have been produced by faith, not flesh.

Not Speculative or Philosophical

Daniel's reaction has not been produced by his own speculations of what the vision might mean. Nor, indeed, has he philosophized upon it, therefore agitating his own spirit. The point of the vision has registered upon his understanding, even though he does not yet know all of its details. Those who remain casual when exposed to great revelations have simply not perceived the point of them. It is their ignorance that has produced their spiritual stupor.

The Spirit and Body Distinguished

The dialog that follows confirms there is a radical distinction between the human spirit and the body of flesh in which it resides. While the body has a rather large variety of sensibilities, and the ability to be affected in a variety of ways, the spirit is even more versatile. It can have deeper and more profound reactions than the body, even affecting the condition of the body.

GRIEVED IN MY SPIRIT

"I Daniel was grieved in my spirit . . ." Other versions read, "my spirit was distressed," NASB "was troubled in spirit," NIV "my spirit within me was anxious," RSV "my spirit was pained because of this," BBE "was affrighted at these things," DOUAY "my spirit in my body trembled," Septuagint "was deeply disturbed," NJB and "pierced hath been my spirit." YLT

- Paul also testified to the impact of things upon his spirit. "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to

preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit , because I found not Titus my brother” (2 Cor 2:13-14). He also spoke of his “spirit” being “refreshed” (1 Cor 16:18). Once, when he saw a city given over to idolatry, his “spirit was stirred in him” (Acts 17:16).

- Job spoke of the “anguish of my spirit” (Job 7:11), and testified that his spirit was “troubled” (Job 21:4).
- David said his spirit was “overwhelmed ” (Psa 77:3; 142:3; 143:4).
- Ezekiel spoke of the “heat of my spirit” (Ezek 3:14).
- Mary , the mother of our Lord, said “ my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior” (Lk 1:47).

There is a deeper part of man – deeper than the soul, and more profound than the body. It is the part that is more in the image of God, and that can be more profoundly impacted by what He makes known. Young Elihu, whose words God confirmed, wisely said, “But there is a spirit in man : and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding” (Job 32:8). That is, the “understanding” God gives is intended for, and registers upon, the human spirit.

Three Levels of Impaction

Men can be impacted, or experience reactions, on three different levels: in the body, in the soul, and in the spirit. The measure of a persons relationship with God can be discerned by how deeply truth affects him.

The body. Some people’s religion never goes deeper than the body. Their supposed spiritual experiences are all in the body, or flesh. It is most revealing to hear people speak of how they have been blessed by God. Too often, their experiences are confined to the body. While it is true that our bodies can be affected by exposure to God and the things of God, that affectation is by no means superior.

The soul. The soul of a person can have deeper and more profound experiences than the body. However, the soul is more closely aligned with the body than with the spirit, and vacillates between good and evil. Emotion is more prominent in the soul, which must often be exhorted to come up higher (Psa 42:5,11;43:5). For this reason, there is a certain danger in embracing a soulish religion that roots in the less profound part of man. In my judgment, much of the religion of our day is soulish in nature. It does have an impact upon people – one that is deeper than mere bodily sensation. However, it does not go deep enough to have a lasting and thorough impact upon the individual.

The spirit. Here is the most profound part of man. The Divine imagery is most precisely found here. When we are born again and receive the Holy Spirit of God, He testifies to our spirit that we are the children of God. As it is written, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the

children of God” (Rom 8:16). If our religion does not reach into this part of our persons, it is all in vain and pointless. If we have difficulty deciphering which part of our complicated makeup is our spirit, the Word of God can more precisely define it for us. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit . . .” (Heb 4:12).

This distinction is not an academic definition. It is one that registers upon the understanding through faith. The individual is thus enabled to take hold of the truth, and walk in the Spirit with confidence and spiritual understanding.

Now, Daniel has been exposed to a vision of great magnitude and profound meaning. He has seen beastly and destructive governments rise in the earth. Within one of those governments – the fourth one – a kingdom and king of a different sort surfaced. It was of such an order as caused the vision to shift to the heavenly throne, and the Judge of all. The impact of that kingdom, represented by a “little horn” that spoke boastfully, required the consideration of one “like unto the Son of man,” who would receive a kingdom that would never be destroyed.

All of this accented the significance of the king and kingdom represented by the “little horn.” It confirmed to Daniel that this was something that had been noted in heaven, and against which particular Divine judgment had been determined. This kingdom would, in a very real sense, endeavor to overthrow God’s kingdom. While such an effort is, from one point of view, foolish, it is also of such gravity as will not be overlooked by the “Lord of kings.” Even though earthly initiatives against the God of heaven, His truth, and His people, are vain, they are of the greatest gravity.

Daniel senses something of the magnitude of all of this, and his spirit within him is grieved, vexed, troubled, and distressed because of it.

GRIEVED IN THE MIDST OF MY BODY

“ . . . in the midst of my body . . .” Other versions read, “within my body,” NKJV “within me,” NASB and “in the midst of the sheath.” YLT The last translation – “in the midst of the sheath” – is of particular interest. The “sheath,” in this case, is the body. The “spirit” is like a living sword that is within that sheath.

Thus, the reaction of Daniel to the vision goes deeper than a mere fleshly sensation or emotional impact. “In the midst of my body” indicates Daniel’s impression was closer to his “inner man” than the “outward man.” It was spiritual, not carnal, and had more to do with perception than raw emotion.

TROUBLING VISIONS

“ . . . and the visions of my head troubled me.” Other versions read, “the visions in my mind kept alarming me,” NASB “disturbed me,” NIV “terrified me,” NRSV “made me afraid.” GNV

Daniel was a rare soul – one who could be so deeply affected by what God revealed to him! The injection of evil and wickedness into the world troubled him. He could not dismiss it with a wave of the hand, affirming that whatever will be will be! Some souls without such sensitivity hear of the great evils that are in the world and glibly reply, “Well, God said these things would happen, and therefore we should not be alarmed.” Such individuals are more closely related to the fatalist than to the God of heaven. Daniel was not such a person!

The Lord made known coming evens to Daniel personally, and he was “troubled.” This is the troubling of faith, not unbelief. It is an alarm caused by the personal abhorrence of evil and the contemplation that it would become prominent. It is the sort of impact the revelation had upon John when he was given to see the rise of the false church: “I was greatly astonished” NIV (Rev 17:6).

Such sensitive souls are precious in the sight of the Lord, for they have a “contrite and humble spirit,” able to be affected by the revelations of God (Isa 57:15). These are souls who can be entrusted with great revelations that would crush others, and even repel some. There are poor souls who cannot receive any word from God that speaks of doom, judgment, or the rise of iniquity. It is too much for them to bear, for their view of God is too small. Others, like Daniel, can be shown such things with profit. While they do agitate the spirit and cause trouble, yet such people will seek a greater understanding.

One further observation. The things of God are conducive to great sobriety. Those who are granted insights into the truth of God, regardless of the level of those insights, do not take them lightly. In some respects, they are disturbing to our human constitution, producing an acute awareness of the greatness of God and the magnificence of His wisdom and ways. A person who approaches the truth with a casual and merely academic spirit is a person who has not seen anything significant. Without exception, such souls have, at the very best, a stunted and unproductive view of the God of heaven and what He is doing. Vast bodies of refreshing and essential realities are hidden from them. I know of no exception to this rule.

DANIEL ASKS FOR TRUTH

“ 16a I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this.”

Troubling truth drives timorous and disinterested souls away, for they care not to inquire into things that are disturbing. They suppose by ignoring them, they will find relief. As the world puts it, “What you do not know cannot hurt you.” However, those who traffic in the truth of God, handling the Word of God with care and concern, do not have such reactions. They want to know things that at first seem beyond their grasp. They have a heart to know matters for fully that initially trouble and disturb them.

This is involved in buying, or appropriating the truth at all cost. As Solomon wisely counseled, “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Prov 23:23). Such efforts are described in the admonition, “apply thine heart to understanding” (Prov 2:2). The aggressiveness attending such application is painted most vividly in these words: “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Prov 2:3-5).

Isaiah spoke of engaging in an effort to obtain what God freely gives “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa 55:1).

The Lord Jesus said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Mat 7:8).

Many souls remain in a state of spiritual ignorance because they have never engaged in a fervent quest to comprehend what God has revealed. The sophist may imagine that something revealed does not have to be sought – that the revealing of it equates to obtaining and comprehending the matter. However, consider the text before us. Something has been revealed to Daniel, a man “greatly beloved” by God. The revelation has been extensive, and Daniel’s thoughts upon it have been prolonged as well. Yet, the matter is not clear to him. He desires to probe into these things further, sensing there is more to be seen than he presently comprehends.

Thus, he engages in an initiative to appropriate further understanding. The very fact that he engages in such a pursuit confirms he understands the Lord delights to unveil His secret to those who fear Him, and even show them His covenant (Psa 25:14). God has a desire to make Himself known!

This facet of our Lord has reached its apex in Christ Jesus, and still many remain ignorant of it. Wherever this is known, souls will have a hearty appetite for the things of God, engaging themselves in a fervent quest for the truth, for which they have received a compelling love (2 Thess 2:10).

I CAME NEAR

“I came near . . .” This is the posture of valid inquiry – coming near! In matters pertaining to God, distance is forbidden, and dwelling in the furthest areas causes fear to dominate. As it is written, “They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice” (Psa 65:8). A religion that allows people to remain at a distance from the Lord while maintaining identity with Him is false to the core. Distance is the prelude to spiritual death, and is on the broad road that leads to destruction.

It is a principle in Divine relationships that insights and acceptance are granted from the posture of nearness . Thus we are admonished, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith . . .” (Heb 10:22). And again, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). It is said of the New Covenant, “For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Heb 7:19). It is no wonder that the Psalmist exclaimed, “But it is good for me to draw near to God” (Psa 73:28). And James the brother of our Lord wrote, “ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8).

Thus Daniel comes close to the Source of the revelation, pressing in to acquire a greater understanding of what he has seen in visions. His interest has been kindled, his spirit distressed, and his head troubled. But he does not shake his head in despair, or grieve because of his inadequacies. Instead, he comes near!

ONE OF THEM THAT STOOD BY

“ . . . unto one of them that stood by . . .” And who is this “one” who was standing by? It is not the Ancient of days Himself, nor is it the Son of man. Instead, it is one of the multitudes that are ministering to the Ancient of days (v 10). What boldness it took to approach that holy concourse of ministering spirits! The sight of a single angel has struck fear into the hearts of some. Thus message-bearing angels often told the recipients of those messages, “Fear not” (Gen 21:17; Matt 1:20; 28:5; Lk 1:13,30; 2:10). When Manoah and his wife, the parents of Samson, saw an angel, Manoah concluded, “We will surely die” (Judges 13:22). When a holy angel addressed John the beloved on Patmos, John said of the occasion, “I fell at his feet to worship him” (Rev 19:10), which worship the angel refused. Yet, Daniel now comes near this amalgamation of celestial spirits, and dares to make a request of one of them.

We learn from this that a love for the truth brings with it boldness to enter otherwise fearful environments . Believing and loving the truth enables – yea, compels – a soul to press into holy realms in a quest for the truth.

We also learn from this event that heavenly beings have more insight . They are closer to the Lord, and thus know more of His inscrutable workings. While they do “desire” to look into the marvelous Gospel of the grace of God (1 Pet 1:12), they are not lacking in their knowledge of many of His wonderful works. Those who have received extensive explanations from angels include Jacob (Gen 31:11-13), Hagar (Gen 16:9-12), Balaam (Gen 22:32-35), Zechariah (Zech 1:9-17; 4:4-14; 6:4-7),

Zacharias (Lk 1:13-20), Mary (Lk 1:30-37), the shepherds (Lk 2:10-12), and John (Rev 7:13-17; 17:7-18).

I ASKED HIM FOR THE TRUTH

“ . . . and asked him the truth of all this.” Other versions read, “began asking him the exact meaning of all this,” NASB “asked him the true meaning of all this,” NIV “questioning him about what all this was,” BBE and “sought to learn of him the truth of all these things.” Septuagint

The prophet senses that more has been made known to him than he presently discerns. The significance of this is seen when we consider what a singular prophet this man was. He excelled in all manner of wisdom, was an expert in language, and had understanding of dreams. Yet in this matter he had to inquire for further insights . What he had, though it far excelled ordinary gifts, was not enough to decipher the vision.

He is not satisfied with a fragment of the truth, but wants, as it were, the whole loaf. Souls who are content to see only the periphery of truth are depriving themselves of needful resources, and will soon find such fragmentary knowledge is wholly inadequate.

One of the curses of contemporary religion is that it leaves the people content with minuscule spiritual understanding. They are not compelled by the messages they are hearing, and the positions they are embracing, to draw near to the Lord, and press into the most holy place. They are coming short of taking the kingdom by violence (Matt 11:12).

Daniel drew near to one of these angelic hosts, just like John did when he went to an angel and said, “Give me the little book” (Rev 10:9). His heart made him eager. His faith made him bold.

And what is it that Daniel sought with such eagerness and boldness? He wanted to know “the exact meaning” NASB of all that he had seen – the “true meaning,” NIV together with “the certainty” DARBY of it all.

He knew that those closer to the heavenly throne have a greater understanding of the determinations issuing from that throne. This is a kingdom principle that will greatly aid us in the acquisition of spiritual knowledge.

Those who are learned in the ways of the world, or have obtained recognized worldly credentials, will find they are of no value in matters pertaining to God unless, by faith they are close to Him .

DANIEL IS GIVEN THAT FOR WHICH HE ASKS

“ 16b So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.”

We will find there is a certain congeniality in the heavenly realms. Those who come by faith into these lofty environs will find hospitable spirits and a cordial atmosphere. If this was true in the time of Daniel, before the removal of sins and the reconciliation of the world, you can only imagine the extent of friendliness and the willingness to grant understanding for those who now come in the name of Jesus!

HE TOLD ME

“So he told me . . .” The candidness of the words are refreshing: “So he told me.” Other versions read, read, “So he said he would disclose to me . . .” NRSV “And he said to me that he would make clear to me,” BBE and “he told me the truth.” Septuagint Thus Daniel sought and found. He asked and received. He knocked and it was opened. He took advantage of the knowledge of one standing close to him, and found there was a readiness to grant what he requested.

A Principle

It is in order to say a word here about taking advantage of available knowledge. This is a particularly sensitive point with the Lord. Jesus indicted the Jews of His day in these scathing words: “And ye will not come to me , that ye might have life” (John 5:40). He also upbraided an entire generation for not engaging in a quest to obtain knowledge that was readily available to them. “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here” (Mat 12:42).

When Jesus was among us, one of the primary differences between His disciples and the multitudes was that they inquired further into the truth , asking Him to explain significant things to them. Such words as “Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field” (Matt 13:36), and “Declare unto us this parable” (Matt 15:15), signify the manner in which truth is obtained. Who can forget their frequent inquiries like, “Why say the scribes that Elias must first come?” (Mk 9:11), “Master, when shall these things be?” (Lk 21:7), and “Why could not we cast him out?” (Mk 9:28).

O the blessedness of an inquiring spirit! Throughout the ages, such souls have been few and far between. But it does not need to be this way! No persons who extend themselves to know the truth of God will be disappointed!

Every person is responsible to obtain the understanding and insights that God makes available to them. The Lord held the Gentile world accountable for not receiving the limited, yet consistent, testimony of creation. He also held the Jews responsible for not getting the message of Moses and the Prophets.

Today, because of the nature of institutionalism, a great deal of stress is placed upon being on the initiative to take the truth to the people. And, indeed, such an emphasis is certainly in order, for the Lord Jesus directed us to do this (Matt 10:7; Mark 16:15; Lk 24:47; Acts 16:10).

However, let it be clear that there are areas where God has planted men and women who have a grasp of the truth. It is the responsibility of those who know of this circumstance to avail themselves of that truth. The people went out to hear John the Baptist (Mk 1:45). The multitudes extended themselves to go to Jesus, even coming out of the cities and running on foot to get to Him (Mk 6:33-34). When Paul was being held in Rome, they appointed him a day when he could declare the Word of God. It is written, “there came many to him into his lodging” (Acts 28:23).

This has always been a hallmark of people who want to know the truth of God. Daniel is such a man, and thus he engages in an effort to appropriate more than he had already received – and he had received much.

HE MADE ME KNOW

“ . . . and made me know the interpretation of the things.” Other versions read, “gave me the interpretation of these things,” NIV “instructed me,” DOUAY “he revealed to me what these things meant,” NJB “He explained it to me,” NLT and “caused me to know.” YLT

The angel did not hesitate to share the truth with Daniel. It is almost as though he was waiting for him to make an inquiry. Because the angel resided in the realm from which the vision came, he had understanding that Daniel did not have. Yet, he was willing to share it, for that is the manner of those who perceive the truth of God. The heavenly economy is one that is shared among the interested. It is personal, but not private, individual but not exclusively so.

THE IDENTITY AND ORIGIN OF THE BEASTS

“ 17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.”

Thus far we have learned considerable about these four kings and kingdoms.

- First, we were introduced to them as a single statute comprised of various metals. Beginning with the golden head, the kingdoms degenerated in value, going from gold to silver to brass to iron to iron mixed with clay. This value was both moral and spiritual and revealed a moral decline that allowed for each succeeding kingdom to become more ruthless and less discerning (Dan 2:32-33).
- These kingdoms were not simultaneous, but succeeded one another. They began with Nebchadnezzar and Babylon, and continued successively through Rome (2:38-41).
- The kingdoms tended more and more to be divided. Babylon was represented by a single golden head, the Medo-Persians by arms of silver, the Grecian by brass belly and thighs, and the Roman by legs, and feet with ten toes 2:38-43).
- All of these kings were temporal (2:35).
- God would set up a kingdom during the times of these kings – during the time of the fourth kingdom in particular (2:45a).
- The fourth kingdom is given a more precise and extended definition than the others (2:40-44).
- The kingdom of God would decimate all of them 2:45b).
- The displacement of the kingdoms was the result of a Divine initiative, as seen in the Babylonian kingdom being given to the Medes and Persians (5:28).
- All four of these kingdoms were produced under Divine influences, pictured as “the winds of heaven” striving upon the sea of humanity (7:2).
- Whereas the second chapter described their value, the seventh chapter describes their character.
- The four kingdoms came out of the agitated sea, each one different from the other, and succeeding each another (7:3).
- They were radically different from each another (7:3).

- They all had beastly natures, as compared to the gracious nature of the God of heaven (7:4-7).
- Each succeeding kingdom tended to be more ruthless than the previous one, with the fourth kingdom being the most brutal of all (7:4-7).
- Again, more attention is given to the fourth kingdom, as in the second chapter (7:7-8).
- The fourth kingdom is said to have been different from all before it (7:7).
- Ten horns were upon the head of this fourth beast (7:7).
- From among these ten horns arose another “little horn” with unique characteristics that caught the attention of the prophet. It had the eyes of a man, and a mouth that erupted in boastful speaking (7:8).
- The “little horn” displaced three of the other horns, filling up the space they had occupied (7:8).

What Is Being Declared?

Daniel is being shown the world in its most refined and influential state – global governments. Here is worldly power brought to its vertex. If men are in any way capable of resisting God, or superimposing their will upon His, they will be able to do it in government – which is a God-ordained power (Rom 13:1).

- The Lord will show us that all human wisdom, power, and initiative, is vain . It has the curse of Adam upon it, and was never intended to be permanent. God uses government, but government can never use God. The God of heaven employs governments for the fulfillment of His purpose, but governments may never use God for the fulfillment of their objectives.
- We are also being shown that every time men unite apart from the unifying effects of faith, they eventually come against God. If men are not motivated by faith, unity among themselves drives them even further from God. Just as they did at Babel, they make their plans without God in mind, and seek to promote their own name. This is why the unity of the sons of God is so unique. It is “the unity of the faith” (Eph 4:13) and “the unity of the Spirit” (Eph 4:3). All other unity, regardless of its refinement, seeming consistency, or longevity, is destined to destruction.
- Nothing of the world will be salvaged – it will all pass away, its fashion and everything associated with it (1 Cor 7:31; 1 John 2:17).
- Although “the kingdoms of this world” are not independent from God, who is the Governor among them (Psa 22:28), they are under the allocated authority of the devil himself. Satan once showed

Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Mat 4:9). Jesus refused, resisting his temptation, and appealing to the God who ruled over Satan, and alone is to be worshiped. In this encounter we learn that Satan is more apt to work in the environment of government, where men more easily fall prey to his devices . The lusts of the flesh and eye, as well as the pride of life, are more subtle in that realm because of the dazzle of its temporal glory.

Now the angel will elaborate on the kingdoms to which we have been introduced.

GREAT BEASTS

“These great beasts, which are four . . .” When we first saw these beasts, they were also called “great beasts” (7:3). The word “great” not only means huge in size, but dominating in nature . The idea is that they were extensive, ruthless, and able to crush their opponents.

FOUR KINGS

“are four kings . . .” In our first exposure to these global kingdoms, they were also called both “kingdoms” and “kings” “these kings” and “all these kingdoms” (2:44). Now they are again referred to “four kings.” In verse twenty-three of this chapter, they will also be referred to as “kingdoms.” Viewed as “kings,” these beasts refer to certain rulers, given authority by God to do their own will among the sons of men. Viewed as “kingdoms,” they are seen as the result of the king’s dominion – empires that reflected his will and were ruled by him.

These are not four simultaneous kings, but represent four distinct rulers and their dominions. Their greatness cannot be effectively contested by men, nor can they be overthrown through human strength alone. They cannot be displaced unless God Himself removes them. They are, indeed, “ great beasts.”

OUT OF THE EARTH

“ . . . which shall arise out of the earth.” The vision itself portrayed the beasts as coming “up from the sea.” Now the angel explains the vision by saying it means they arose “from the earth.” It is the earth, or the people upon it, that are like a turbulent and restless sea. To be even more specific, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa 57:20-21).

There is a kingdom that is “the kingdom of heaven” – a phrase used exclusively by Matthew (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 5:3,10,19,20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:11,12; 13:11,24,31,33, 44,45,47,52; 16:19; 18:1,3,4,23; 19:14,23;20:1; 22:2; 23:13; 25:1,14). This is the same as “the kingdom of God,” which emphasizes the head of the kingdom. “Heaven” puts the accent upon its headquarters, or the realm from which it is governed. All other kingdoms, particularly the four under consideration, are “out of the earth.”

“The earth,” in the sense of our text, is more than the physical environ in which we live. Rather, it is the cursed realm upon which our affections are NOT to be placed (Cool 3:2). The parts of our person that are “upon the earth,” are to be “mortified” (Col 3:5). This is the realm from which these kingdoms surfaced – the domain upon which our minds are not to be placed (Phil 3:19). Those who are in Christ Jesus have an even more precise view of the earth than Daniel. That is not owing to any moral or spiritual inferiority in this man of God. Rather, it is because of the time in which he lived – a time when sin had not yet been “put away” (Heb 9:26).

A GLIMPSE OF THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

“ 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.”

Once again, the Divine manner is seen. Our vision is not permitted to linger long upon earthly powers. Quickly, before proceeding further, a word about the saints of God is given. This does not refer to angels, as some suppose, for they have not been destined to take the kingdom. As it is written, “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak” (Heb 2:5). It is man that was “set over the works” of God’s hands, not angels (Heb 2:7). Presently, it is a “Man,” the “Man Christ Jesus” who is administering the Kingdom, a rule in which the saints will eventually fully participate (Heb 2:8-9).

Notice the way this vision is unfolding to Daniel. First he sees the rise of four beasts, ruthless and dominating. Then he is given to see “the Ancient of days,” God the Father. Then he beholds celestial hosts surrounding His throne and ministering to Him, carrying out His determinations. Following that He is given to see one “like unto the Son of man” – the glorified Christ. He sees the Kingdom being given to Him upon his return to heaven from the conquest of battle. Now his attention is turned to those who have been reconciled to God through the atoning death of Christ – “the saints of the most High.”

It should be obvious to you where the Spirit is putting the emphasis. It is NOT upon the beasts. It is not upon kings. It is not upon kingdoms. It is not upon the “little horn.” Rather, the greater stress is placed upon God, His Son, and the saints. The angels knows this, and we do well to know it as well. We are not to allow any one to cause our attention to rest upon those who are governed by God , impressive though they may be. The burden of our consideration is to be placed upon the Lord and the execution of His will.

BUT

“But . . .” This is a Divine disjunctive – a word that signifies an over-ruling of adverse circumstances . This is done primarily with Divine wisdom, although power is integral to the intervention as well. This overthrow is contrary to human reasoning, and is utterly impossible from a human point of view. The idea is as follows. Even though beastly governments rose in power and domination, and even though they were ruthless and appeared to be invincible, yet the will of the Lord was wrought, and not their own.

This kind of reasoning is found repeatedly in Scripture. It forms one of the pillars of spiritual thought, and provokes faith and hope in those who receive it.

- When Abraham was traveling through Philistine territory, he feared that Abimelech, king of the Philistines, would see his beautiful wife and take her for his own. Consequently, he instructed her to say she was his sister, which, indeed, she was, for they had the same father (Gen 20:12). Abimelech did take Sarah for his own. However, then is when God intervened. It is written, “**BUT GOD** came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife” (Gen 20:3).
- When Laban dealt treacherously with Jacob, it seemed as though he had the upper hand. However, God intervened. “And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; **BUT GOD** suffered him not to hurt me” (Gen 31:7).
- When Joseph’s brothers dealt hatefully with him, it seemed as though they had the advantage. Yet several years later Joseph testified that God was in the matter. “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; **BUT GOD** meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive” (Gen 50:20).
- When Samson slew a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, his strength became dissipated, and he was perishing for thirst. The situation was hopeless until God intervened. “**BUT GOD** clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water there out; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore, which is in Lehi unto this day” (Judges 15:19).
- When the Messiah came, the people condemned Him, delivering Him into the hands of Pilate. He was, according to the Word of the Lord slain by the hands of wicked men. But then God intervened. “And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher. **BUT GOD** raised him from the dead” (Acts 13:29-30).
- When sin entered into the world, and death by sin, a cloud of hopelessness hovered over the entirety of the race. It was then that God intervened. “ **BUT GOD** commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8).

- The description of mankind apart from Christ was staggering. They were “dead in trespasses and sins,” dominated by the devil, and were “by nature the children of wrath.” It was then that God intervened. “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. BUT GOD , who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (Eph 2:3-5).
- Ponder our state before God moved toward us. “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another” (Titus 3:3). Such a condition was condemned by God, and that without any equivocation whatsoever. However, then God intervened. “ BUT WHEN THE KINDNESS AND THE LOVE OF GOD OF SAVIOR TOWARD MAN APPEARED , But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” NKJV (Titus 3:5).

With the injection of this single word – “BUT” – the whole picture is changed. Suddenly the “four great beasts” do not appear as “ great” as they did before. We are not only taken behind the scenes, but a Divine determination is revealed to us. It is so certain that it is unveiled and declared just as though it had already taken place.

THE SAINTS OF THE MOST HIGH

“ . . . the saints of the most High.” As I have already mentioned, this phrase does not refer to angels, for they have not been slated to have the ultimate dominion (Heb 2:5-10). The promise of having things subjected to them was not given to angels (Heb 2:5). Further, in redemption, Jesus did not assume identity with the angels, but with the seed of Abraham (Heb 2:16). His present reign is as “the Son of man,” in which He is a pledge of the dominion of His brethren (Heb 2:6, 9-11).

I do understand that this passage is the subject of some controversy. Some, attempting to use word definitions, define “saints of the most High” as a term for Deity. Others say it refers to lofty heavenly beings, such as the holy angels. It is true that the word “saints” is sometimes used of angels (Deut 33:2; Job 15:15). But the vast majority of texts using this word is referring to “the saints that are in the earth” (Psa 16:3).

These are people who are holy and dedicated to the Lord. They have been made holy by virtue of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. While Abraham and the patriarchs were holy, their holiness was vastly inferior to that which is experienced in Christ Jesus. This was not owing to any deficiency in their character, but was rather due to the times in which they lived. Until Christ they did not have “the fulness of the blessing” (Rom 15:29), and thus were “not made perfect apart from us” NKJV (Heb 11:10). They are included in the term “the saints of the most High,” but are here viewed in their capacity after Jesus appeared to put away sin, and was consequently exalted to the right hand of God.

The Most High

In, Scripture God is referred to as “the most High” forty-one times. The first reference is found in Genesis 14:18, where Melchizedek is said to have been “the priest of the most high God.” Hebrews 7:1 also refers to this text. The book of Daniel mentions “the most High” thirteen times (3:26; 4:17,24,25,32,34; 5:18,21; 7:18,22,25,27).

The expression “most High” emphasizes God as the Source of all power. No one has ever given Him power in any sense or to any degree. Further, every personality that possesses power, whether in heaven, the earth, or under the earth, has been given that power by God. “There is no power but of God” (Rom 13:1), and that is particularly true in regard to kingdoms. The psalmist emphasizes how significant this is. “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God ” (Psa 62:11). Jesus taught us to pray, “Thine is the kingdom, and the power ” (Matt 6:13). God is, in every sense, “the most High!”

Thus, “the saints of the most High” are those who are aligned with the God of heaven. They are in His favor because of the Son of man.

TAKE THE KINGDOM

“ . . . shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom . . . ” Other versions read “shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom,” NKJV “will be given the kingdom, and they will rule.” NLT

The saints “take” the kingdom because it has been given to them – like Canaan was given to Israel. The fact that they take the kingdom means the beasts temporarily possessed something that really did not belong to them. Their authority, impressive though it appeared, was delegated and temporary. “The kingdom” is really intended for the saints, not the beasts!

The Spirit repeatedly holds this fact out to the saints, ensuring them of the glorious destiny that has been determined for them. The following affirmations speak of the time when the saints will “take,” or “receive,” the kingdom.

- “For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth ” (Psa 37:9).
- “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth ” (Psa 45:16).
- “Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever , the branch of my planting,

the work of my hands, that I may be glorified” (Isa 60:21).

- “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth ” (Mat 5:5).
- “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat 25:34).
- “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom ” (Luke 12:32).
- “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world , was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs , faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect” (Rom 4:13-14).
- “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him : if we deny Him, He also will deny us” (2 Tim 2:11-12).
- “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (James 2:5).
- “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations : And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Rev 2:26-27).
- “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in my throne , even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev 3:21).
- “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth ” (Rev 5:10).
- “And I saw thrones , and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev 20:4).

Avoid Speculation

Because of an enormous amount of theological speculation, all manner of finely tuned theologies have been developed concerning the reign of the saints. Such speculations produce more questions than answers, and tend to turn us from Divine emphases. Care must be taken not to get caught up in language and views that extend beyond the perimeter of revelation.

Later in this vision, I will provide a more thorough exposition of this matter. Verses twenty-two and twenty-seven also touch upon this subject, and will provide the basis for more extensive remarks.

At this point, however, I do want to draw attention to some phrases that are NOT found in any version of Scripture. Yet, they are quite prominent in some views of the kingdom of God: “The millennium,” “the thousand year reign of Christ,” “the thousand year reign,” and “thousand year reign.” No standard translation contains any of these phrases. Never do the Scriptures affirm Christ will reign a thousand years. Rather, they say “the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus” will reign “with” Him for a thousand years (Rev 20:4). Never do they say Christ will “reign on the earth” Rather, they declare those who have been made “kings and priests” unto God will “reign on the earth” (Rev 5:10).

For this reason, in delineating this passage, I have chosen to confine myself to words “which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor 2:13). I find it difficult to believe the truth of God can be better understood when filtered through expressions that are of human origin. While I choose not to sit in judgment upon any person, I must insist that no dignity be assigned to any language other than that employed by the Holy Spirit.

A Brief Summation

Suffice it to say, Daniel has seen the Son of man receive the kingdom upon returning to heaven and coming before God. Now he sees the same kingdom being possessed by the saints of God. Whatever any person chooses to believe, it must not be allowed to overshadow these basic revelations.

FOREVER

“ . . . for ever, even for ever and ever.” Other versions read, “for all ages to come,” NASB “forever – yes, for ever and ever,” NIV “even to the ages of ages.” DARBY

The idea here is that the dominion given to the saints will never end – i.e., “world without end” (Eph 3:21). The kingdom given to the Babylonians ended. The kingdom given to the Medes and Persians ended. The kingdom given to the Grecians ended. The kingdom given to the Romans ended. But the kingdom given to the saints will never end. Now we have received it by faith (Heb 12:28), but there is a time coming when we will enter into the fulness of our inheritance.

It is in this sense that the Spirit speaks of “the world to come” – that is, the “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet 3:13). There – in “the world to come” – eternal life will be experienced in its fulness (Mk 10:30). That is the “world” that is the subject of Apostolic elaboration (Heb 2:5). The “prize” for which we run (1 Cor 9:24), and toward which we “press” (Phil 3:14), is related to “the world to come,” when the saints will “take the kingdom,” possessing their “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). It is then that they will judge the world and angels (1 Cor 6:2–3). It is then that they will inherit the earth, enter fully into life, and be given authority “over the nations” (Rev 2:26). Daniel saw this over 2,600 years ago! What a marvelous revelation of the closeness of this prophet to the heart of the God of heaven!

THE DISTURBING PART OF THE VISION

“ 19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.”

We will now see that insight into eternity does not remove inquiry into time. Truth never makes men indifferent to the encroachment of the enemy. The knowledge of God never gives birth to indifference or a casual attitude toward iniquity. Thus Daniel, even after hearing of the saints taking the kingdom, is repulsed by the very appearance of the pitiless and dominating fourth beast. He will inquire into this matter further, with a particular interest in the strange “little horn” he has seen.

Inquiring Into the Truth

Here, it is in order to say something about the attitude of men toward the truth of God. Honest and good hearts inquire into the truth, seeking to comprehend it more fully. A heart in which faith resides is not content to remain ignorant of the truth of God. It wants to see more clearly and understand more fully. Thus David prayed, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Psa 119:18). In Apostolic language, this is receiving “the love of the truth.”

Even though it may appear quite harsh, the Spirit makes clear that it is not possible to be saved without the appetite and preference for the truth . How strongly the case is stated. The one whose coming is “after the working of Satan” is said to be successful in deceiving those who are perishing “because they received not the love of the truth , that they might be saved . And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess 2:10-12). Who can fail to see the importance of an appetite for the truth of God. Should men refuse to receive a love for the truth, it is not possible to avoid being damned – condemned by God!

When God made His mind known to the people of Israel, they did not inquire into that revelation with eagerness and consistency. The Lord noted their reluctance and said, “I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing” (Hosea 8:12). Of the wicked God said, “Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee” (Psa 50:17). God does take note of the attitude of people toward His truth.

If there is one disturbing thing in the modern church, it is its lack of love for the truth of God. It is not unpopular to see church people more interested in social activities than God’s truth. The level of ignorance concerning the Word of God that prevails in the average congregation and individual Christian attests to the absence of a love for the truth.

You will find no such absence in Daniel. He was restless when he could not understand, and took aggressive measures to see and comprehend more. In this regard, he was reflecting the nature of people who have faith.

THE FOURTH BEAST

“Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet . . .”

The casual person would have been content with what had already been revealed about this fourth beast. However, it was different – “diverse from all the others.” It was not only dreadful, but “exceeding dreadful.” Its teeth were not normal, but were made of “iron.” Its nails, or claws, were not conventional, but were “nails of brass.” It did not merely overcome those it opposed, but “ate its victims, crushed them, and trampled their remains underfoot.” NJB

Remember, this is a vision given to Daniel by God. It is not an interpretation, but a revelation of the nature of the fourth king and kingdom. Daniel sensed there was more to be known about this beast, and pressed in to obtain more insight. How is it that such violence took place, and what did it all mean?

THE TEN HORNS

“ . . . And of the ten horns that were in his head . . .” And what about those ten horns upon the head of this beast? No other beast was so described. Further, as with the iron teeth and brass claws, there was no parallel of this gross creature in nature. This kingdom was to other kingdoms what the fourth beast was to the creation – a gross distortion.

Note, Daniel does not try and figure out the meaning of “ten horns,” or attempt to compare it to some other likeness with which he was familiar. Instead, he gives his “heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven” (Eccl 1:13). To an even further degree than Solomon, Daniel knew, “Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Prov 2:5).

Note also the object of Daniel’s inquiry. He is not asking for guidance in the fulfillment of duty, but for an understanding of what God has revealed to him. Those who engage in such a pursuit will see duty with more clarity.

THE OTHER WHICH CAME UP

“ . . . and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.”

Daniel’s attention has been arrested by the unusual phenomenon of the “little horn.” Already he has pondered the vision and seen something. In the vision Daniel saw “another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots.” Now he perceives the three horns were not removed prior to the rise of the “little horn.” Rather, they were actually violently displaced by the “little horn.” The three other horns “fell” before it, making room for the “little horn.” Other versions read, “the other which came up, causing the fall of three,” BBE “and the other that came up, and rooted up some of the former,” Septuagint “the little horn that came up afterward and destroyed three of the other horns ,” NLT and “the other horn, which came up and to make room for which three of them fell out.” NRS

Behold how the violence continues. Not only did the fourth beast devour and its victims, stamping into dust what fell from between his iron teeth, but the rise of the “little horn” is also attended by violence. Three of the ten horns are uprooted, fall, plucked up by the roots, and destroyed. This is verily a kingdom that “takes the sword,” or lives by violence (Matt 26:52; Rev 13:10).

An Intelligent but Aggressive Horn

When Daniel saw the vision, this little horn was seen as “having eyes LIKE a man” (7:8). Now Daniel refers to this horn as one “that had eyes,” or was noted for intelligence and shrewdness. However, Daniel has already seen something more in this “little horn.” In the vision this horn was seen to have “a mouth speaking great things.” Now Daniel has seen he had a “mouth that spake VERY great things.” Its boasting and brashness went even further than those before it.

More Impressive

One additional thing is noted that reveals how Daniel had deeply pondered what he had seen. He said the horn was “more stout than his fellows.” Other versions read, “whose appearance was greater than his fellows,” NKJV “which was larger in appearance than its associates,” NASB “looked more imposing than the others,” NIV “seemed greater than the others,” NRSV “his look was bolder than the rest,” Septuagint “looked more impressive than its fellows,” NJB and “more conspicuous that its fellows.” TNK

Although the fourth beast was itself quite impressive, and although the ten horns were most unusual, yet this “little horn” seemed to be superior. It was actually more imposing than the surrounding horns – which means it did not remain “little.” In fact, it took up the space of three former horns.

It was obvious to Daniel that this was no ordinary vision. He was being shown things most

significant – things concerning which more could be known. Therefore, he pressed forward to obtain that knowledge.

A Word Concerning the Ordinary

Right here, a word concerning “the ordinary” is in order. It is possible to become so riveted to the ordinary, common, customary, and familiar, that the soul goes to sleep. Confined to the “normal,” spiritual growth and increase is highly unlikely, if not impossible. It is always safe to assume that, at the very best, we have only touched the hem of the garment of truth. Take, for example, the case of Daniel. Even though he was granted to see an extended and most remarkable vision, yet there was more to be comprehended than what he had seen. However, that additional insight had to be pursued. It did not simply fall into Daniel’s lap while he was occupied with lesser things.

There are “things which are above” – things that are “where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” These are “things” God intends for us to have, are made accessible in Christ Jesus. The Scriptures speak of them, and the heart senses them. Yet, they must be sought – pursued with a relentless spirit (Col 3:1). Believers are to “set,” or place, their “affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:2). New life in Christ is peculiarly adapted for this quest. As it is written, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Col 3:3).

Thus, we have been suited for this pursuit in Christ Jesus, losing our identity with the world and gaining it in Christ Jesus. The “things” already exist, and are for us. However, they are “in heaven,” and not on the earth. Therefore, if we do not obtain an appetite for them, and engage in a fervent quest for them, we simply will not have them.

When we confront impoverished souls – particularly ones who have long worn the name of Christ – a most serious condition is unveiled. Those who do not have the things for which new life in Christ Jesus has adapted them, simply have not sought after them. They have not developed an appetite for them, and therefore they remain in a sort of spiritual fog. I do not speak of novices, or new converts – although in our day, they generally outshine the long-term believers in seeking for things above.

At the time of our text, Daniel is an old man, according to fleshly assessment. But his spirit, or inner man, is not old. He still probes for the truth and inquires after a more thorough understanding. You do well to emulate him, and not the indifferent religious multitudes all about you. When Jesus said “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you,” it was more than the recitation of an option at your disposal (Mat 6:33). Participation in God’s kingdom and the appropriation of His righteousness cannot be realized apart from seeking them – i.e., seeking them “first,” or as matters of priority.

If you choose to energetically pursue the things of God, you will find yourself in sharp conflict with the Christian world . But you must pursue them anyway, pushing beyond the narrow borders of

conventional Christianity . Dare to be like Daniel! Dare to pursue the truth with consistency and zeal!

A TEMPORARY TRIUMPH

“ 21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.”

We know from what follows that God did not intend for Daniel to remain ignorant of these things. It is ever true, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever” (Deu 29:29). Daniel has sensed this truth in his heart, as well as known it in his mind. It is true that he was no doubt compelled by godly curiosity. Yet there is more to this account than that. The prophet also knew the nature of God to a measurable degree, and perceived there was more to be known. Thus he pressed in closer to know the mind of the Lord.

I BEHELD - THE VISION CONTINUES

“I beheld . . .” It is apparent that Daniel was expectant. Notice, he has asked a question of one of the angels that stood by, And yet the angel has not yet answered him. He first asked “the truth of all of this,” and was told that the four beasts are four kings that will rise out of the earth. Notwithstanding, the saints – not the beasts, or kings of the earth – will ultimately take the kingdom. Now Daniel pursues further understanding of the fourth beast in general, and the “little horn” in particular. While he waited for the answer, he “kept looking,” NKJV at the vision, sensing there was more to come. And, indeed, he was given to see even more before further explanations were given to him.

A Principle

There is a principle in this text that speaks to us about the process of spiritual learning. While we wait for illumination, we must continue to peer into what has been revealed. This was not only true for Daniel during the time of the First Covenant, but for us as well who are living under the greater light of the New Covenant. Peter put it this way: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy (more fully confirmed NRSV) ; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts ” (2 Pet 1:19). Many poor souls have deprived themselves of precious understanding simply because they did not look long enough and intently enough into the Word of the Lord. They expose themselves too briefly to the Word, and thus never really get the blessing of understanding.

This is one of the strongest arguments against brevity and generalization – two enemies of good understanding. Some people are exposed to enough of God’s Word to come away empty, all the while thinking they have somehow taken hold of the truth. Those miserable teachers who speak so briefly on the things of God, even then remaining on the glassy surface of the truth, have actually hurt the people whom they are supposedly feeding.

If men do not grow deep into the Word, sin will become more deeply rooted in them. You simply cannot advance in the faith while allowing your attention to dart here and there, never dwelling for any length of time upon what the Lord has revealed.

Thus Daniel continues to look, and as he does, he sees something that precious few souls have ever seen – even to this very day.

MADE WAR WITH THE SAINTS

“ . . . and the same horn made war with the saints . . . ” Other versions declare that activity was in the process of occurring : “and the same horn was making war against the saints,” NKJV “that horn was waging war with the saints,” NASB and “ is making war with the saints.” YLT

The language is most arresting! There are some (not a few) who feel this “little horn” represents Antiochus Epiphanes, who around B.C. 170 unleashed a most terrible persecution against the Jews. He plundered the Temple, took Jerusalem by ferocious assault, and forcibly imposed the Greek religion upon the Jews (B.C. 167). Figure 1 provides the reasoning for this view.

Are “the Saints” the Jews?

To this point, three notable things are said about “the saints.” First, they are “the saints of the most High.” Second, that they “shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.” Third, that the “little horn” will wage war against them. I suggest that this type of language has never been applied to the Jews without Christ – and that was their condition during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes.

The word “saints” is used sparingly in Moses and the Prophets. Moses used the word in reference to the angelic hosts that accompanied the revelation of God at Mount Sinai (Deut 33:2-3). Hannah said the Lord would “keep the feet of His saints,” as compared to the silencing of the wicked (1 Sam 2:9). In the dedication of the Temple, Solomon prayed, “let Thy saints rejoice in goodness” (2 Chron 6:41). Job referred to the angels as “His saints” (Job 15:15). There are twenty references to “saints” in the book of Psalms (16:3; 30:4; 31:23; 34:9; 37:28; 50:5; 52:9; 79:2; 85:8; 89:5,7; 97:10; 116:15; 132:9,16; 145:10; 148:14; 149:1,5,9). These passages deal with godly people, and not with the Jews as a whole. A single reference in Proverbs finds the word used the same way – of holy people (Prov 2:8). Daniel uses the term in this way also (Dan 7:18,21,22,25,27). Hosea and Zechariah do the same (Hos 11:12; Zech 14:5).

When it comes to descriptions of the Jewish nation as a whole, Moses said, “thou art a stiffnecked people” (Deut 9:6). “From the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD” (Deu 9:7). “Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you” (Deu 9:24). God Himself said of the nation, “But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people” (Rom 10:21).

“Saints” was never used of the Jewish nation as a whole. They were a holy people by Divine choice, not because of their godliness (Deut 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19). There were, to be sure, a remnant of holy people among them. The prophets did foresee a time when they would be holy (Isa 62:12), which was a view of them in Christ, or as the “redeemed of the Lord.”

Within the New Covenant, however, “saints” is a standard reference to those who are in Christ Jesus, being used sixty times (Acts 9:13,32,41; 26:10; Rom 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25,26,31; 16:2,15; 1 Cor 1:2; 6:1,2; 14:33; 16:1,15; 2 Cor 1:1; 8:4; 9:1,12; 2 Cor 13:13; Eph 1:1,15,18; 2:19; 3:8,18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18; Phil 1:1; 4:22; Col 1:2,4,12,26; 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:10; 1 Tim 5:10; Phile 1:5,7; Heb 6:10; 13:24; Jude 1:3,14; Rev 5:8; 8:3,4; 11:18; 13:7,10; 14:12; 15:3; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:8; 20:9). These are the saints to whom Daniel’s vision refers – the ones against whom the “little horn” wages war.

Also, this whole matter is introduced against the backdrop of the exaltation of the “Son of man,” which puts the events of reference after Jesus died, rose again, ascended to heaven, and was enthroned at the Father’s right hand with “all power in heaven and in earth” (Matt 28:18).

Parallel to John’s Revelation

The words of our text parallel the revelation given to John on Patmos. He also saw a beast that wages war against God’s witnesses (Rev 11:7). Satan himself is depicted as a “dragon” that “went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev 12:17). Another beast is also “given to make war with the saints” (Rev 13:7).

In both Daniel and Revelation we see the sharp conflict that exists between the saints and the kingdoms of this world. They are of another order, and the world senses it. That conflict is brought to its apex in a particular ruler and kingdom – one which sprang out of the fourth beastly kingdom, which was Rome.

Because this is developed more fully in the succeeding verses, I will only make a few cursory remarks here.

First, the worst of all powers are those who openly come against the people of God. Whether it takes the form of bloody persecution, or outlawing public prayer and forcing the children of the saints to

be subjected to the theory of evolution, the justification of sodomy, and other forms of debauchery and corruption, it is the same: a war against the saints.

We will find this power is a religious power – one that operates on the same principles as the governments of this world. The “little horn” is a religious power that fiercely and openly opposes the people of God.

PREVAILED AGAINST THEM

“ . . . and prevailed against them.”

Other versions show how Daniel saw the battle raging, and the triumph passing to the “little horn.” “. . . and prevailing against them,” NKJV “and overpowering them,” NASB “and defeating them,” NIV “proving the stronger,” NJB and “and overcame them.” TNK

Later Daniel says this power will “wear out the saints” (8:25). Daniel 12:7 speaks of the scattering of “holy people.”

Revelation 13:7 speaks of a power to whom it was “given” to “make war with the saints and to overcome them.” The seventeenth chapter of Revelation shows a women “drunk with the blood of the saints” (17:6). This, then, is no strange truth! Again, an extensive elaboration of these things is found in the verses that follow.

The Point Is the Ultimate Outcome, Not the Moment

There is a kingdom principle to be noted here. First, an institutional emphasis will not allow us to read the words of Daniel with profit . They run counter to what religious men consider to be success. In fact, a considerable percentage of Western Christianity is tailored to reduce any friction between it and the world. It appears as though this is working well, but it has certainly not resulted in any fruit toward God (Rom 7:4).

In our text, the saints are overcome – yet they eventually will “take the kingdom.” Their defeat, therefore, is not what it appears to be. Let it clear the saints are not overcome by being compelled to sin. They are not caused to fail morally or spiritually.

It is God’s manner to allow His people to be at a great disadvantage before He exalts them. In this way He gains the greater glory. This is seen in a number of instances.

- Abraham and Sarah. After the Lord promised a primary seed through Abraham, and that many

nations would spring from him, it appeared as though he and his wife had been defeated. His wife was old and barren, and Abraham was old and his body “as good as dead” reproductively (Rom 4:18-20; Heb 11:12). It was then that the promise was fulfilled, and Abraham took the kingdom, so to speak.

- Joseph. When he was young, God revealed to Joseph in dreams that he would be dominant, and others would bow to him (Gen 37:5-10). However, in the intervening years Joseph was overcome. His brothers overpowered him, threw him into a pit, and sold him to a band of Ishmaelites (Gen 37:28). He was then sold to an Egyptian named Potiphar, and through the lies of his wife, Joseph ended up in prison (Gen 37:36; 39:20). But then, Joseph took the kingdom, so to speak, and was seated upon the throne of Egypt (Gen 41:41-43).
- Israel. As the offspring of Abraham, the promises of God belonged to Israel. Yet, when they were few in number, and because of a fierce famine, they had to go down into Egypt. There, in a foreign land, they were overcome, and forced to serve “with rigor” (Ex 1:13-14). Yet, in due time, they took the kingdom, so to speak, coming out of Egypt with high hand, and seeing the destruction of their enemies (Ex 14:8; 15:30).
- The Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus, Lord of glory, came into the world to “save sinners” (1 Tim 1:15). While in the world, He was overcome, “crucified through weakness” (2 Cor 13:4), “made to be sin” (2 Cor 5:21), and “made a curse” (Gal 3:13). Yet Jesus took the kingdom, destroying the devil, plundering principalities and powers, and conquering death (Heb 2:14; Col 2:15; Acts 2:24).
- The Gentiles. Although the promise of blessing was extended to the whole world and every nation (Gen 12:3), the Gentiles were overcome. Sin ravaged them until, as a whole, they became reprehensible (Rom 1:21-32). They were “not a people,” and did not “obtain mercy” (1 Pet 2:10). Yet, in due time they took the kingdom, becoming “fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Eph 2:19). Many of them are “now the people of God” and have “obtained mercy.”
- The two witnesses. The book of Revelation speaks of two witnesses who speak for God. The beast from the bottomless pit makes war against them, overcomes them, and kills them. Their dead bodies lie in open shame in the street for three and a half days. But then they take the kingdom, so to speak, as they stand upon their feet. Great fear comes upon their enemies, and they ascend up into heaven in a cloud while their enemies watch (Rev 11:3-11).
- The saints. The people of God are the light of the world and the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13-14). Yet, they are overcome, being accounted “the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things” (1 Cor 4:13). Daniel sees them overcome. John sees them overcome. The greatest among them suffer as martyrs as they are “killed all the day long” (Rom 8:36). Yet, in our text, they take the kingdom, and the glory and greatness of that great kingdom is given to them.

This is the manner of the Kingdom! This is how God brings glory to His great name! He brings them through the Red Sea, delivers them from fiery furnaces, and causes them to overcome the lion’s den. This is how God works, and it ought not surprise us when Daniel sees the Lord doing precisely this with His saints. They are overcome by the “little horn” – but not ultimately! In the final analysis, it is the “little horn” that will fail, and the saints of the most High who will reign for ever and ever !

CONCLUSION

The insights given to Daniel are intended for you! What he was granted to see pertains to all those who are in Christ Jesus. Daniel was given to see that in the world, we ought not expect recognition and honor. But this world is not all there is. There is a world to come, and the saints of God will be in charge of it, reigning with Jesus. In Christ, there is a reign in your future!

We must not allow ourselves to be spiritually naive about our tenure in this world. If the world hates us, we ought not marvel (1 John 3:13). If some of our brethren are overcome, suffer martyrdom, or appear to be “the tail,” it should not cause us to stagger. The battle is not over yet! It is still true, “And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath” (Deu 28:13). The Lord will “bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom 16:20). Be strong! Have faith in God and “hope to the end” (1 Pet 1:13). Good things are ahead for all who keep the faith.

In the meantime, God is able to “keep you from falling and present you faultless before His presence” (Jude 24).

The Prophecy of Daniel

AN EXPLANATION OF THE VISION IS GIVEN, #2

Lesson #23

INTRODUCTION

Daniel's faith has compelled him to seek for more understanding. In a protracted vision, he has witnessed the entrance of wicked and dominating empires into the world. He has seen the rise of

another despotic power that speaks against God and wages war against His saints. He has also witnessed this power prevailing against the saints, even though they would eventually take the kingdom. The whole matter was disturbing to Daniel. However, this was not the disturbance of unbelief, but a troubling caused by faith. It is caused because he believes God, yet does not fully comprehend what has been revealed to him. He has inquired concerning the truth of all the things he has seen. Graciously, the vision has been extended, and an explanation is forthcoming. He is asking, and will therefore receive.

THE EXPERIENCE OF HABAKKUK

Daniel is much like Habakkuk in this regard. Habakkuk was shown that Israel would be punished for its iniquity by a bitter and hasty nation – the heathen nation Babylon. The punishment would be harsh, and it was difficult for the prophet to hear about it. He cried out to God, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” (Hab 1:13). Habakkuk was not arguing with the Lord, nor was he angry about what he was shown. Rather, he was inquiring for further understanding. Like Daniel, he sensed the oppression of the wicked could not continue indefinitely. He knew the nature of God would not allow the extended expression of iniquity.

The Lord answered Habakkuk, clarifying the whole matter. He told him that a Divine appointment was involved that would not be reversed. “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” (Hab 2:3). Notwithstanding, because Babylon, under the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, would do wickedly, the Lord would also bring them down – even though He would use them to chasten His people. “Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein” (Hab 2:8).

DANIEL'S VISION

Daniel's vision is also about an appointment. Just as Habakkuk saw wicked people oppressing those “more righteous” than they, so Daniel has seen a wicked power oppressing the saints, who were also “more righteous.” Just as Habakkuk, Daniel knew the Lord was righteous in allowing such things to happen. Therefore, he inquires concerning the truth of these things.

It is important to note that he does not ask WHY these things will occur, but rather that he might have a greater understanding of them. Faith begins with the postulate that “The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works” (Psa 145:17). That is how faith moves the believer to reason. Thus the following inquiries have been made by holy men.

- MOSES. “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight” (Ex 33:13). “And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory” (Ex 33:18).

- GIDEON. “And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me” (Judg 6:17).
- JOB. “I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; show me wherefore Thou contendest with me” (Job 10:2).
- DAVID. “Show me Thy ways, O LORD; teach me Thy paths” (Psa 25:4).

Now Daniel has inquired concerning “the truth of the fourth beast . . . and of the ten horns . . . and of the other (horn) which came up.” He has not asked out of mere curiosity, but because of his knowledge of God and His righteousness. It is the Spirit that compelled his request that will now bring the answer to the man of God.

NOT JUST HISTORY IN ADVANCE

I want to once again emphasize that we are not merely viewing history in advance. While the revelation vouchsafed to Daniel spoke of the kingdoms of this world, they were not the heart and core of the visions given to him. It is a principle in God’s kingdom that what is incidental at the least, and preparatory at the most. What transpires in the heavenly realms is always fundamental.

This has already been confirmed in the book of Daniel. When Nebuchadnezzar was given a vision of the dominant world empires, the vision did not end with those empires. Rather, it was what “the God of heaven” did was primary. What He did was forever, what occurred among men was temporary (2:44-45). Further, the rise, fall, and replacement of those four kingdoms was initiated in heaven, not upon the earth.

The vision before us has the same emphasis. Viewing the same four kingdoms of chapter two from the standpoint of their character, they are all shown to be temporary, even though they were remarkably influential.

As we view the panorama of the vision of the four beasts, the primary aspects of the vision relate to God, His Son, and His people . Our minds are not allowed to remain for long upon the four gruesome and ruthless beasts. No sooner have we been shown them in their true character than we see “the Ancient of days,” sitting in regal splendor and surrounded by myriad of ministering hosts. Immediately, the worst of the beasts is slain and reduced to oblivion (7:9-12). No sooner has this taken place, than we are shown one “like unto the Son of man” being brought before “the Ancient of days.” It is an introduction to the Savior of the world, returning from the conquest of the foe. He is given “dominion, glory, and a kingdom.” All “people, nations, and languages” serve Him, and His “dominion is an everlasting dominion.” His kingdom is one that “shall not be destroyed” (7:13-14).

Upon inquiring about this vision, Daniel is told that the four beasts are “four kings which shall

arise out of the earth.” However, before another word is said, or another aspect of the vision is seen, the prophet is told, “But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever” (Dan 7:18).

Who would conclude at this point that men ought to be unduly enamored of the four beasts? What would justify a theology that placed the accent upon worldly empires, when God has clearly placed it upon His own kingdom. He set it up during the peak of worldly power. He gave it to His Son. Now He has revealed it is also going to be given to the saints, who are “joint heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17).

Now, after seeing the “little horn” making war with the saints and prevailing against them, we are again brought to consider “the ancient of days.” We must resist any inclination to let these beasts or the little horn dominate our thoughts. The vision certainly includes some significant things about these governments and rulers. However, they are not the heart of the message. The unfolding of this vision to Daniel revealed the following priorities.

- (1) The God of heaven – His throne and His judgment.
- (2) The Son of man – His exaltation and reception of the Kingdom.
- (3) The Kingdom of God.
- (4) The saints of the most High God.
- (5) The governments of the world and their rulers.

Our thinking must reflect these priorities. The consideration of Scripture must not be allowed to start and end with thoughts of the governments of men. Rather, it must start and end with Deity.

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS CAME

“ 7:22a Until the Ancient of days came . . . ”

The idea is that the “little horn” continued to prevail against the saints UNTIL God intervened. The NIV reads, “As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came.”

UNTIL

This is a significant word meaning, “up to the time that,” “even to,” or “up to.” It is a term of limitation – Divine limitation. This is an expression of Divine Sovereignty, or government. It reflects the outworking of Divine purpose, particularly regarding the frustration of evil purposes.

Including this verse, Daniel has used this word sixteen times thus far.

- The statue of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream remained prominent “UNTIL that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image” (2:34).
- The humbling of Nebuchadnezzar in becoming like a beast grazing in the open field continued “UNTIL seven times ”passed (4:23,32).
- The above humbling lasted “UNTIL” Nebuchadnezzar knew “that the most High rules in the kingdoms of men” (4:25,32).
- The first of the four beasts of this very vision was like a ravening lion “UNTIL the wings thereof were plucked” (7:4).
- The “little horn” of this vision was prominent “UNTIL thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days” sat in judgment (7:9).
- The “little horn ”spoke great and blasphemous words “UNTIL the beast” that supported it “was slain” (7:11).

There comes a time when the mighty God of heaven asserts Himself, bearing, as it were, His “holy arm” (Isa 52:10). It is then that men see the rule of God that has been in place all along. His arm is made bare when He simply injects Himself into the affairs of men – when He “comes.”

When the Lord comes in this sense He is never ignored, and there is never resistance. When He “came from Sinai, and rose up in Seir,” He met with no resistance. At that time He “shined forth from

mount Paran,” and there was no glory that competed with His own. It is only God’s concealment that allows for men to rise up and “gather together against the Lord, and against His Christ” (Acts 4:26). Those who “make war with the Lamb” do so only because He is hidden to them (Rev 17:14).

When the Lord unveils His glory, or when He displays His Son in all of His glory, “the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men,” will not rush out to fight Him . Rather, they will hide “themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains.” They will say “to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev 6:15-16).

Ultimately, it is the presence of the Lord that utterly disrupts all that is ungodly. The ultimate revelation of this will take place when the Lord returns in all of His glory. It is then that the wicked one will be consumed “with the spirit of His mouth,” being destroyed “with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess 2:8).

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS CAME

The coming of the Ancient of days declares that judgment is about to take place. God cannot focus upon His people without showing them mercy, or look intently upon the wicked without His wrath falling upon them. It is possible for men to look at iniquity without it disturbing them. It is not possible for God to do so! It is also possible for men to see the children of God in great affliction, and not be moved to mercy by the sight. It is not possible for God to do so! When the Lord focuses His attention upon the unrighteous, they are about to be judged. When He beholds the affliction of the righteous, they are about to be delivered. Further, there is a point where the iniquity of men will no longer be tolerated by God. Equally true, the suffering of His saints can also reach a point where it will no longer be endured by the God of heaven.

Examples

Therefore, when the earth became corrupt “before God,” and was filled with violence, God “looked upon the earth.” When this occurred, judgment was pronounced (Gen 6:11-13). When the sin of Sodom became “grievous,” and God looked upon it, the people were judged, while delivering righteous Lot (Gen 18:20-21; 19:13).

Conversely, when the eyes of Lord look upon His suffering people, deliverance is on the way. Therefore, when God saw “the affliction ”of His people in Egypt, and “heard their cry,” the exodus was set in motion, as well as the judgment of their oppressors (Ex 3:7-8).

An awareness of these things is what prompted David to cry out, “Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved” (Psa 80:3,7,19). Again he prayed, “Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins” (Psa 25:18).

Thus those who “seek” His face are looking for a revelation of His Person (Psa 24:6; 27:8; 31:16). They are desiring that He look upon them, “search” them, “know” their hearts, and “try” them (Psa 139:23). They know in their hearts that God is affected by what He beholds. Therefore they conclude their desire for mercy and forgiveness will be met when the Lord looks upon them.

Circumstances Change

Notice what happens when the Ancient of days comes ! The circumstances will change. The oppression of the ungodly will cease, and judgment will be rendered in favor of the saints of God. This is because, when the Lord “comes,” He does so to deliver judgment. He will not be passive or indifferent about what He beholds! It is thrice written in Scripture, “He cometh to judge the earth” (1 Chron 16:33; Psa 96:13; 98:9). That judgment is against the ungodly, and in favor the godly. It is in order to put down the oppressor and raise up the oppressed.

All of this is done in strict accord with Divine purpose, and the times and seasons, which are in God’s power, and His power alone. It is also in unvarying harmony with His Divine nature, which is always against the ungodly and for the godly. Let of have done with childish views of God!

THE SAINTS, JUDGMENT, AND THE KINGDOM

“ 22b . . . and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.”

Notice the Divine care that is evident in this vision. The Lord graciously guards against the rise of fear, which has a tendency to blind the eyes and harden the heart. Before elaborating further upon the vision, the prophet is again shown the conclusion of the matter. If it is true that “we are saved by hope” (Rom 7:24), then hope must be satisfied before any further information is given to the mind .

The “little horn ”prevailed against the saints – but only for a time . He received his power for a season , the saints receive theirs “for ever, even for ever and ever” (v 18).

JUDGMENT WAS GIVEN

“ 22b . . . and judgment was given to the saints of the most High . . . ” Other versions read, “a

judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High,” NKJV “judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One,” NASB “and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High,” NIV and “then judgment was given for the holy ones of the Most High.” NRSV

The “little horn” had judged the saints of the most High to be “the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world” (1 Cor 4:13). NIV That is why he chose to wage war against them. That was his foolish and bedarkened judgment – an assessment which moved him to oppose the people of God.

Man, however, is not the final judge. It is the Living God who is the “Judge of all the earth” (Gen 18:25). His verdict is always the final one, and it takes effect when it is passed. Ultimately every decision that men make will be filtered through the judgment of God. Those decisions that were in harmony with His judgment will accrue to the benefit of those making them. At every point that human judgment varied from Divine judgment, due penalties will be levied against the transgressors. It is this ultimate judgment to which Paul refers when he wrote, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12).

Now the Living God rules in favor of the saints. There is no opposing His judgment. It is final, and it is effective. This is a judgment to which the enemy must bow.

THE TIME CAME

“ . . . and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” Other versions read, “and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom,” NKJV “and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom,” NASB “and the appointed time arrived , and the saints possessed the kingdom,” DARBY “ when the time came for the holy ones to assume kingship,” NJB and “for the time had come , and the holy ones took possession of the kingdom.” TNK

Times Are Appointed

God is a God that appoints times. This is involved in “times” and “seasons” being in “His own power” (Acts 1:7). By an act of His will the Lord can conclude or commence both times and seasons. He can give the power of the Chaldeans to the Medes and Persians (Dan 5:28), doing so at the appointed time. In this text, the kingdom is given into the hands of the saints. It is accomplished by an act of Divine judgment – judgment that ruled in favor of the saints, who were being oppressed. This came at the appointed time. Thus we read, “the time came.”

This aspect of the Divine nature – appointing times – is frequently declared in Scripture. A few examples will suffice to introduce this section.

- Noah’s entrance into the ark. “In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark” (Gen 7:13)

- Israel's deliverance from Egypt. "And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt" (Exo 12:41).
- The birth of Isaac. "Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son" (Gen 18:14).
- The plagues of Egypt. "And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land" (Ex 9:5). "And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies" (Exo 12:51).
- The Babylonian captivity. "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs . . . For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab 1:6; 2:3).
- The birth of Jesus. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal 4:4).
- The day of Pentecost. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1).

In each of these examples a new era began. A change of circumstances took place, by the will of God, and at the appointed time.

The Saint's Time

God has appointed a time when the kingdom will be given to His saints. Until they receive it, it has been given to the Son, who is presently administering that kingdom with the saints of God in mind (Heb 2:9).

The Old Covenant writings contained hints of the saints receiving the kingdom. However, apart from Daniel's revelation, they were somewhat vague. An example of one of these prophecies is found in the 45 th Psalm. "The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom Thou mayest make princes in all the earth" (Psa 45:13-16).

Another such prophecy is found in the 149 th Psalm. “Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints . Praise ye the LORD” (Psa 149:5-9).

The 49 th Psalm contains a remarkable allusion to the appointed destiny of the righteous. “Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning ; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling” (Psa 49:14).

Isaiah also spoke to Israel of such dominion. “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee ; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet ; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 60:14).

None, however, were so clear as the affirmations of this text. What Daniel is given to see is most precisely related to Apostolic proclamations, which makes it all the more remarkable.

- “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world ? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels ? how much more things that pertain to this life?” (1 Cor 6:2-3)
- “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him : if we deny Him, He also will deny us” (2 Tim 2:11-12).
- “And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations : And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father” (Rev 2:27).
- “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne , even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne” (Rev 3:21).
- “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth ” (Rev 5:10).

The glorified Christ delivered a stirring message to the church in Philadelphia – a church that was being oppressed by religious people, and retained only a little strength by reason of the conflict. His word to them reflected the truth made known in our text. “Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie; indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet , and to know that I have loved you” NKJV (Rev 3:9).

Daniel is seeing all of these texts, and more, being fulfilled. The God of heaven has determined His people will not always be the brunt of abuse! They will not always be subjected to persecution, malignment, and opposition. Such things will occur ONLY during the time of their earthly sojourn. There is coming a time when the saints – all of them – will fulfill this word: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” And, lest anyone consider these to be vain and irrelevant words, Jesus adds, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mat 13:43).

“The time came” of our text, is the “Then” of Matthew 13:43! It is when Jesus will “make” the enemies of the saints bow at their feet (Rev 3:9), and when they will be given “power over the nations” (Rev 2:27). It is when they will “judge the world” and “angels” (1 Cor 6:2-3), and “reign with” Christ (2 Tim 2:12).

This time is an appointed time. That is why Daniel saw it come. It is a time cast in stone, as it were, that cannot be altered or made void. It is a time that is as precise as the appointed time for the commencement of flood (Gen 6:3; 7:13). It is as sure as the appointed time for Isaac’s birth (Gen 18:14). It is sure as the appointed time for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Ex 12:51). It is as certain as the birth of Jesus in the “fulness of the time” (Gal 4:4).

There is coming a time when God will render judgment in favor of the saints, and the tables will be turned. They will become “the head,” and “not the tail” (Deut 28:13). No more will a “little horn,” or any other earthly power, oppress them. No more will they be “made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men” (1 Cor 4:9). No more will they be “persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (Matt 5:10), or be “tempted” by “the tempter” (1 Thess 3:5). Just as surely as the saints of God are presently subjected to the aggression of the devil, even that surely “the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet” (Rom 16:20).

The Sureness of the Vision

Daniel, “a man greatly beloved” (Dan 10:11), was given to catch a glimpse of this time while the First, and inferior, covenant was still in place. He saw these things during a time of chastening, while captive in a heathen land, and surrounded by heathen wise men. The fact of these circumstances confirms the sureness of the Divine appointment.

Since the time God revealed these things to Daniel, over 2,500 years have passed, and “the end is not yet” (Matt 24:6). However, faith is able to perceive that this only accents the sureness of the vision. God has declared it to be His manner to make something known in advance, as though challenging the universe of adversaries to stop His appointment from happening. He did this when He told the devil the Seed of the woman would bruise his head (Gen 3:15). He did it when He spoke to Abraham of a Seed, through whom the nations of the world would be blessed (Gen 22:18; Gal 3:16). Thus did the God of heaven say of Himself, “I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done”, saying,

My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure” (Isa 46:9-10).

Daniel saw the time when “the saints possessed the kingdom,” and possess it they will!

RECEIVED NOW BY FAITH

By faith, those in Christ receive that kingdom now. They are given to move about in it, and occupy certain areas of it, even as Israel moved into Canaan, occupying portions of it. There are certain rights and privileges they presently enjoy that are a pledge of better and fuller things to come.

The Spirit is careful to state this circumstance in most precise words. “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb 12:28). Our reception of the Kingdom presently consists of coming into a certain spiritual domain – one that dominates all other domains. Here is how the Spirit says it. “But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:22-24).

NOT YET FULLY

Our present circumstance, however, is not the fulness of the blessing. We know this is the case because we remain in a condition where jeopardy exists. Thus the text continues, “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb 12:25). The kingdom itself cannot be moved, but those who remain in this world can be moved. Therefore they are warned, “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb 12:28).

What Daniel saw is NOT fulfilled while the saints are walking by faith. Our present condition is one of orientation and preparation. It is a time when we are given lesser things to rule – like our own bodies (1 Cor 9:27). It is a time when we judge lesser things – called “smaller matters,” and “things that pertain to this life” (1 Cor 6:2-3). We do “shine as lights in the world” (Phil 2:15), but we do not yet “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom” of our “Father” (Matt 13:43). Our enemies do not yet bow at our feet, nor has Satan been crushed beneath them (Rev 3:9; Rom 16:20).

Like Abraham

We are presently like Abraham in Canaan. The land belonged to him by promise, and he sojourned in it. Yet dominion was not given to him at that time. It is said of our father Abraham, “And He gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet He promised that He would

give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child” (Acts 7:5). God showed Abraham his inheritance and said, “I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it” (Gen 15:7, 18-21).

That is precisely our present condition. The Lord is showing us the kingdom He has appointed to us. At this time, we do not see it all, but what we see is glorious. We are sampling some of the essential elements of that kingdom, like “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17). We realize token victories, as the Lord “causes us to triumph in Christ” (2 Cor 2:14). When we “resist the devil” and he “flees from us” (James 4:7), we are walking in the promised land, like Abraham.

But this is not the fulness of the blessing! This is not the pinnacle of our appointed reign! The time WILL come when we will fully “possess the kingdom!”

Like David

Presently, we are “kings.” That is the solemn proclamation of the Lord. “And from Jesus Christ, who is the Faithful Witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6).

But do not imagine that circumstance makes you master over every situation, or guarantees your domination of every present enemy. Those who teach such things are not honest, and are not representing the mind of the Lord. It is true, we are now “kings,” but, like David was for a season, we are kings incognito or in secret and undercover.

There came a point in David’s life when the Spirit of God departed from his predecessor king Saul, and rested upon him. He was but a lad when this occurred, and far from actually sitting upon the throne of Israel. It happened BEFORE he faced Goliath, and while he yet tended but a few sheep for his father. The record of this transfer of the Spirit is related to the time when Samuel anointed David. God had revealed to Samuel that He had “rejected” Saul “from reigning over Israel,” and had “provided” for Himself a king from the sons of Jesse (1 Sam 16:1).

The circumstance: God had rejected Saul as king, and provided another king to reign in his place. The record of the actual anointing is most precise. “Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward . So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah. But the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul , and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him” (1 Sam 16:13-14).

David actually “began to reign” when he was “thirty years old” (2 Sam 5:4). The men of Judah “anointed David king over the house of Judah” shortly before that, after Saul had died (2 Sam 2:4). That was at least twelve years AFTER he was anointed king (1030 B.C. - 1018 B.C.). However, even during those twelve years he was, in a sure sense, king, and the Spirit of the Lord was upon him.

During that time he triumphed over a lion and a bear who threatened his small flock (1 Sam 17:34-36). He also prevailed over Goliath of Gath (1 Sam 17:50). He also conducted a campaign against the Philistines “and slew them with a great slaughter” (1 Sam 19:8). Prior to actually sitting upon the throne, David also “saved the inhabitants of Keilah,” smiting the Philistines “with a great slaughter” (1 Sam 23:5).

He also “invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites,” smiting their land in a total triumph (1 Sam 27:8-9). He also rescued the people of Ziklag who had been captured by the Amalekites (1 Sam 30:1-31). Additionally, he waged war against, and defeated, Ishbosheth (2 Sam 2:13-32).

All of these triumphs occurred AFTER he was anointed, yet were BEFORE he began his reign of forty years.

As the saints of the most High God, this is precisely the circumstance in which we presently find ourselves! We have presently been “anointed” (2 Cor 1:21; 1 John 2:27), and have been constituted “kings” unto God (Rev 1:6). However, we are not yet sitting with Jesus in His throne. We do not yet “appear” as we will ultimately appear (1 John 3:1-2).

But while we wait, we are experiencing some triumphs like David. These triumphs are occasional and not consistent. Sometimes we must flee, like anointed David did from Saul (1 Sam 19:10,18; 20:1; 27:1).

But just as surely as David eventually was seated upon the throne of the house of Judah, just that surely the saints will “possess the kingdom!” That is such a sure thing that God revealed the truth of it to Daniel over 2,500 years ago (as of 11/15/2002). It is something you can surely believe.

THE FOURTH BEAST

“ 23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.”

DIVERSE FROM ALL KINGDOMS

Daniel has asked to “know the exact meaning” NASB of three things. (1) “The fourth beast,” (2) “the ten horns,” and (3) “the other horn which came up, and before whom three fell” – namely “that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words.” NKJV His request is specific, and thus the answer given to him will also be particular and precise.

This precision, however, will be from the heavenly point of view, not that of men. It will not detract from what has been revealed of “the Ancient of days,” one “like unto the Son of man,” or “the saints of the Most High.” One of the acid tests of “sound doctrine” is how it leaves one thinking about God, Christ, and the people of God. If what is taught, or what is embraced, tends to reduce ones view of the Father, the Son, and the saints, it cannot be from God. No message from heaven cultivates a larger view of the earth or a smaller view of heaven. No word from God accentuates man or de-emphasizes God. After the Lord has spoken, or given insight, He Himself, together with Christ Jesus, will rise to the surface of thought. Also, a further understanding of, and appreciation for, His people will be realized. A message, insight, or understanding that does not generate these results is not to be embraced as from the Lord.

A Word About Specificity

There is a certain frame of mind that is evident in the prayers of godly men and women. They are not noted for generalities or vagueness. Whether it is the acknowledgment of the Lord or fervent supplication, prayer is generally noted for its specificity, or exactness. Supplication tends to demand exactness. Some examples should prove helpful.

Hannah

- Acknowledgment. “The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them” (1 Sam 2:6-8).
- Supplication. “And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there

shall no razor come upon his head” (1 Sam 1:11).

Elijah

- Acknowledgment. “And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?” (1 Kgs 17:20).
- Supplication. “And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again” (1 Kgs 17:21)

Jehosaphat

- Acknowledgment. “And said, O LORD God of our fathers, art not thou God in heaven? and rulest not thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee? Art not thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?” (2 Chr 20:6-7).
- Supplication. “And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (2 Chr 20:10-12).

Disciples In Choosing an Apostle

- Acknowledgment. “And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men . . .” (Acts 1:24)
- Supplication. “. . . show whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place” (Acts 1:25)

The Early Disciples

- Acknowledgment. “Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?” (Acts 4:24-25).
- Supplication. “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus” (Acts 4:29-30).

I am persuaded that many prayers prove to be vain because of a failure to be specific in acknowledging the Lord and making requests of Him. When we are admonished, “pour out your heart before Him” (Psa 62:8), it is to be understood insight is to be involved. That insight should extend from the due recognition of God Himself, to the kind of requests we make of Him. You will find that it is exceedingly difficult to be zealous and general at the same time. On the other hand, being specific in our petitions tends to encourage both zeal and importunity. More of both heart and mind are involved in being specific.

Diverse from All Kingdoms

“Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms . . .” Other versions read , “different from all other kingdoms,” NKJV “greater than all other kingdoms,” DOUAY and “excel all other kingdoms.” Septuagint

The word “diverse” means more than simply being different. The word translated “diverse” literally means “to change” or “be altered.” STRONGS This describes the manner in which this kingdom was different. It forced change in other kingdoms, heartlessly pummeling them into subjection. Thus some versions read “greater than all other kingdoms,” or “excel all other kingdoms.” This kingdom did not excel in beauty, or in glory, but in strength and ruthlessness. It was not morally superior, or politically superior, but superior in aggressiveness and raw brutality.

Other kingdoms were sometimes tolerant of their captives or foreigners, even exalting some among them to places of prominence. This was seen in the exaltation of Joseph and Moses (Egypt), Daniel (Babylon, Medes, and Persians), and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Babylon). However, this was not the manner of “the fourth kingdom upon the earth.”

DEVOUR THE WHOLE EARTH

“ . . . and shall devour the whole earth . . .” Other versions read, “it will overcome all the earth,” BBE and “it consumeth all the earth.” YLT Nearly every other version reads “devour the whole earth.”

The word “devour” means “to eat.” It is language that depicts a wild and ravenous beast. You may recall the introduction to this beast said it “devoured its victims,” NIV “ate its victims” NJB (Dan 7:7). Now “its victims” are said to be “the whole earth.” It would be a savage global dynasty to an extent far greater than the other three kingdoms – or any other – ever realized.

This kingdom would not expand its borders by arbitration or negotiation, but by raw military power.

This fourth kingdom is Rome, which spread across the world like a wild and devouring beast. It subdued Italy, Spain, Sicily, and all of Greece and Macedonia. Asia Minor, Africa, and Cyprus were also swept under its dominion. It was a grasping and dominating kingdom.

A Noticeable Lack of Specifics

The explanation being given to Daniel does not contain the specifics the flesh would desire. Remember, this vision was given to Daniel in the first year of Belshazzar's rule – when Babylon, the “head of gold,” was in its glory, with no apparent competitors. Yet, Daniel does not inquire concerning the demise of Babylon, or the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians, which was beginning to loom on the political horizon. Neither, indeed, does he inquire into the demise of the third kingdom, which was Grecia (8:21; 10:20).

The fourth beastly kingdom has particularly intriguing and troubled Daniel because of the oppressive power that came out of it – the “little horn,” who wages war against the saints. That is enough to move Daniel to pursue a further understanding of this ruthless power.

Still, the explanation given to him first declares the power will be brought to nothing, and that its aggression against the saints will be abruptly brought to a conclusion by the judgment of God.

TREAD IT DOWN, BREAK IT IN PIECES

“ . . . and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.” Other versions read, “trample it and break it in pieces,” NKJV “tread it down and crush it,” NASB “trampling it down and crushing it,” NIV “crushing it down and smashing it,” BBE “trample and destroy it,” Septuagint and “tamplng everything in its path.” NLT

In addition to the kingdoms already mentioned, Rome also subdued and brought into submission Gaul, Britain, Germany, Illyrieum, penetrating into Asia. It soon gained possession of Syria and Egypt as well. They were noted for cruelty never before witnessed by the sons of men. Bloody wars were common and innocent people were mercilessly slain in every city and country. The citizens of Rome thirsted for blood, and found entertainment in beholding gladiators fight to the death and wild beasts devour people in their sporting arenas.

In the New Testament Scriptures

During the time when Jesus was born, the Roman empire had already spread across the earth. It is written, “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed” (Luke 2:1). Some of the Roman cruelties are mentioned in the New

Testament Scriptures. In an attempt to get rid of the One “born King of the Jews,” Herod, a puppet of Rome, instigated a slaughter of infants “from two years and under” (Matt 2:16). On another occasion some reported to Jesus “of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices” (Luke 13:1). Knowing the ruthless nature of the Romans, a council of the chief priests and Pharisees reasoned concerning Jesus, “If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation” (John 11:48). Another ruler names Claudius “commanded all Jews to depart from Rome” (Acts 18:20).

The Britannica Encyclopedia says the following of Rome. “For well over a millennium, Rome controlled the destiny of all civilization known to Europe.” BRITANNICA 2002 Grollier’s Encyclopedia says this of the approach of Rome to law. “Roman civil law, which reached its peak under the emperors, excelled in precision of formulation and logic of thought; but it was a law of inequality and social prejudice, and that also became part of the Roman heritage.”

The pagan Roman government leveled ten persecutions against Christians. They are listed below. All of them were vicious, yet only set the stage for the even greater war of the “little horn.”

- The persecution under Nero, A.D. 64. He had Christians hunted down and killed in most atrocious ways. These included: (1) Covering them with the skins of wild beasts, then throwing them to wild dogs who tore them to pieces. (2) Fastening them to crosses, wrapping them in combustible garments, then igniting them to give light in the night. (3) Many of them were burned to ashes before him, which sight he considered to be entertainment. Both Paul and Peter were martyred during his reign.
- The persecution under Domitian toward the close of the first century. During the year of 95, it is reported that 40,000 believers were put to death.
- The persecution under Trajan, beginning in A.D. 100. This persecution continued several years. Laws were passed against Christians meeting, and great numbers of them were put to death.
- The persecution under Antoninus. It was during this persecution that Polycarp, well known disciple of John, was burned to death. Revealing the barbarism of the people, others were devoured by wild beasts, some were tortured in an iron chair made red hot by the Roman barbarians.
- The persecution under Sererius, beginning in A.D. 197. By law, severe penalties were exacted against both Jews and Christians. The persecution extended into Palestine, Egypt, Africa, Italy, Gaul, and other parts.
- The Persecution during the reign of Maximinus in A.D. 235. The persecution was very severe in many places, yet the written records of it are sparse.
- The persecution during the reign of Decius, A.D. 249. Great numbers were killed publicly, and many deserted the faith, consenting to burn incense on the altars of idols. It is said that the most cruel

tortures were employed to kill Christians.

- The persecution under the emperor Valerian in A.D. 257. One of the terrible atrocities that took place at this time was the cutting of the throats of the infants of Christian families.
- The persecution under the emperor Aurelian, in A.D. 274. This persecution was relatively small and brought little disruption to the church. It is as though a period of rest was granted to the churches.
- The persecution under the emperor Diocletian in A.D. 303. Great numbers of Christians suffered tortures of the most severe order. Some were impaled alive. Some had their limbs broken, and were then left to die in pain. Others were roasted by slow fires, while others were hung upside down over smoldering fires that caused them to die from smoke inhalation. Some had melted lead poured down their throats, and the flesh of some was torn off by shells. Still others had splinters of reeds pushed under the nails of their fingers and toes. Those who were not actually killed had their limbs and features mutilated. Through Divine providence, God brought an end to this ruthless reign of terror. The next emperor, Constantine, himself became a Christian and published the first law that favored them. This persecution lasted ten years, during which over 900,000 Christians died.

RECORD TAKEN FROM

MCCLINTOCK AND STRONGS CYCLOPEDIA

These accounts are all in addition to the atrocities associated with Rome's subjugation of the governments of the world. With these things in mind, let us hear the description of the fourth beast again. "Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces." (Dan 7:23).

How vividly history confirms the precision of this prophecy – which is as it know it should be. And, we must remember the significance of the vision relates to the Kingdom of God, and its possession by the saints of the Most High.

THE TEN HORNS

“ 24a And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise . . . ”

In the continued explanation of the vision, the angel will unveil the truth in such a manner as to

diffuse fleshly curiosity. There will be specifics, but not the kind that will satisfy the carnal mind, or those with a penchant for academics.

TEN KINGS

The significance of this circumstance is how it differs from the rise of the four beasts themselves. The beasts did not exist simultaneously, but rose up in sequence. However, this is not the case with the ten horns. They all exist contemporaneously, or at the same time.

Thus, through the revelation of the beastly kingdoms, division has become more and more prominent. Babylon was represented by a single head of gold (2:32,38), and a lion with eagle's wings (7:4). The Medes and Persians were represented by a breast and arms of silver (2:32), and a bear that raised itself upon one side, depicting the prominence of the Persians (7:5). The Grecian kingdom was shown as a belly and thighs of brass (2:32), and a leopard with four heads (7:6). The Roman kingdom was seen as legs of iron, with feet of iron and clay (2:33,40-43), and a beast with ten horns (7:7). Thus the first kingdom had no divisions, the second had two, the third had four, and the fourth had ten – “ten kings.”

A Principle to be Seen

There is a principle here that must be understood. This principle is greater than any effort to be precise in identifying the ten kings. The principle is this: Things that come from the earth tend toward division. Things that come from heaven make for unity and singleness.

The kingdoms of the earth were depicted as a statute of divers metals, and four wild and diverse beasts. The kingdom of God was depicted as a solitary stone that became a solitary mountain, and a single kingdom given to the Son of man, and now to the saints of God. Further, each succeeding worldly kingdom differed from the one before and after it. The nature of the kingdoms changed in accordance with the ones in charge of them. Thus, temporal kingdoms are different one from the other, just as surely as their rulers differ from one another. That difference also generates division, for division is an aspect of

temporality. Something that is deteriorating tends to divide.

However, the heavenly kingdom did not change, even though it passed from the Ancient of days to the Son of man, and ultimately to the saints of God. The Kingdom itself partook of the nature of God, and thus remained substantially the same. Those given charge of the kingdom did not alter the kingdom itself. That is one of the aspects of it being an “everlasting kingdom” (Dan 4:3; 7:27; 2 Pet 1:11).

The Reasoning

Thus far, the vision has promoted a certain kind of reasoning. It is a rationality that is discouraging to the flesh, but encouraging to those who are living by faith. Things characterized by division are destined to pass away, and will eventually yield to that which is eternal. Further, whatever

is beastly in nature will eventually be overcome by something more fierce than itself – i.e., “all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Mat 26:52). Again, “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Gen 9:6). And again, “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword” (Rev 13:10).

Another pattern of reasoning that emerges from this vision is this. Those who are identified with God will eventually dominate, inheriting all things. That is the unfailing promise of God to them. Thus, the saints of God, against whom war was waged, eventually possessed the kingdom.

The Ten Horns

If we view the “ten horns” with these things in mind, we will not allow our vision to rest upon them, for they are temporary, and will eventually yield their power to the God of heaven. It is this very condition that moves us not to attach too much significance to their specific identity. With those things in mind, I will proceed with the consideration of these ten horns, making every effort not to be moved from the primary purpose of the vision.

In summary, the “the horns” show a division of the Roman empire: ten divisions ruled by ten different rulers – and all at the same time. These divisions did not exist at the beginning of the empire, for the text later states “the ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom.” NIV Therefore, at some point in time, ten divisions would occur in this kingdom, with each division being ruled by a different king.

There have been a variety of opinions given by godly men as to the identity of these ten kingdoms. While the opinions differ slightly, they all deal with very real historical divisions of the fourth great kingdom. That there were, in fact, ten divisions within the kingdom cannot be denied, although there is some disagreement as to which ten they were, and in what time period they occurred.

I am providing a table below that lists the various opinions of those devoted to a study of the Word of God. Following that list, I will make some observations that I believe are pertinent to the understanding of this text.

MEDE

1. Britons
2. Saxons

3. Franks
4. Burgundians
- 5 Visigoths
6. Suevians and Alanes
7. Vandals
8. Almanes
9. Ostrogoths
10. Greeks

BISHOP LLOYD

1. Hunns ,A.D. 356.
2. Ostrogoths, about 377
3. Visigoths ,about 378.
4. Franks, A.D. 410.
5. Vandals, A.D. 407.
6. Suevians and Alans, A.D. 407
7. Burgundians, 407.
8. Herules, Rugians, and Thoringians, A.D.476.
9. Saxons, 476.
10. Longobards, A.D. 383

ISAAC NEWTON

1. Vandals and Alans
2. of the Suevians in Spain
3. of the Visigoths
4. of the Alans in Gallia
5. of the Burgundians
6. of the Franks
7. of the Britons
8. of the Hunns
9. of the Lombards
10. of Ravenna

JOHN GILL

1. France
2. Spain
3. Portugal
4. Germany
5. Great Britain
6. Sardinia
7. Denmark
8. the two Sicilies
9. Swedeland
10. Prussia
11. Poland

ADAM CLARKE

1. The Roman senate
2. The Greeks in Ravenna
3. The Lombards in Lombardy
4. The Buns in Hungary
5. The Alerans in Germany
6. The Franks in France
7. The Burgundians in Burgundy
8. The Saracens in Africa/Spain
9. The Goths in the rest of Spain
10. The Saxons in Britain

F.W. FARRAR

1. Selucius I (Nicator) 312-280 B.C.
2. Antiochus I (Soter) 280-261 B.C.
3. Antiochus II (Theos) 261-246 B.C.
4. Seleucus II (Kallinikos) 246-226 B.C.
5. Seleucus III (Keraunos) 226-223 B.C.

6. Antiochus III (Megas) 223-187 B.C.
7. Seleucus IV (Philopator) 187-176 B.C.
8. Demetrius 175 B.C.
9. Heliodorus 176 B.C.
10. Ptolemy Philometor 181-146 B.C.

ANOTHER VIEW

Because some men feel the “*little horn*” is yet in the future, and has not yet been revealed, they choose to view these ten kings as the future revival of the Roman empire. Many of them are prone to believe the European confederacy if the initial formation of that revived Roman empire. In their estimation, the “*little horn*” is a future Antichrist, not yet revealed, who will ruthlessly dominate the whole world.

Observation Number 1

The lack of agreement among these men is owing to at least two things. First, the Word of God specifies neither the names of the individual kingdoms, nor the time of their appearance. Second, those who feel “the saints” are the Jews, as opposed to those in Christ Jesus, choose a time of division that parallels the persecution of the Jews. Thus, Farrar puts the divisions in the early days of the Roman empire (B.C.), while the others put it when it was at its peak, after the exaltation of Christ.

Observation Number 2

The real point of this vision is not the four kingdoms themselves. Neither, indeed, is it the fourth kingdom that was different than all of the others. The emphasis is placed upon the “*little horn*,” whose trait is blasphemy, and who wages relentless war against the saints of God, prevailing over them. For this reason, the burden of Divine emphasis is on that “*little horn*,” which make the “ten kings” incidental. While there is no doubt a specific period and particular kings that fulfilled this aspect of the vision, it is not necessary to define them. A determination to define them will call for too much surmising.

Observation Number 3

In my judgment, those who feel the “ten kings” speak of the future revival of the Roman empire, out of which the “Antichrist” will rise, have not considered key aspects of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and Daniel’s vision.

- God revealed He would set up His kingdom during the times of the four kings and kingdoms depicted in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (2:44).

- That kingdom, set up during the time of the kingdoms, would bring destruction to global kingdoms (2:44).
- The kingdoms would be devastated by God's kingdom during the time of the fourth kingdom, which was the immediate target of the stone (2:34).
- The four kingdoms were, in a sense, a single kingdom, as depicted by the single statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:31-33). No provision is made for a revival, or reconstitution, of any part of that image.
- In Daniel's vision, the fourth beast "was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame" (7:11). The very language forbids the thought of that kingdom being revived, or reconstituted in another political form.

Summary

This is not a subject over which the people of God are to be divided, or about which they are to become contentious. Because of the lack of specifics in this passage, "sound doctrine" cannot be shaped by it alone. Our views of Scripture must be molded by what is plain, not what is vague. We must begin with what is clear, and reason as best we can toward what is not clear. An old aphorism that encapsulates this thought is, "It is through the known, and only through the know, that we come to learn of things unknown."

I will therefore proceed with the following conclusions in mind. They will shape how I will view this remarkable vision.

- That the ten kings are not the focal point of this vision.
- That the "little horn" is the more prominent part of the vision.
- That the vision is in view of the exaltation of Christ, when He came before the Ancient of days and received a kingdom, dominion, and glory. This exaltation is related to the Son of God laying down His life and taking it up again – not to His return to the earth in glory.
- That the commencement of the kingdom of God, when it was given to the Son of man, occurred during the prominence of the fourth kingdom. This kingdom I consider to be Rome.
- Rome did, in fact, follow the Grecian kingdom, which is specifically identified by name. Further, the Grecian kingdom is made known as the third kingdom, which followed the Medes and Persians,

who followed the Babylonian kingdom (5:28; 8:21; 10:20).

- That nothing in either Nebuchadnezzar's dream, or Daniel's vision, allows for the revival of kingdoms said to be destroyed.
- That the significance of this vision is highlighted by its direct bearing upon the saints of God. They are the ones who are oppressed, and they are the ones who receive the kingdom. The vision, therefore, postulates the presence of the saints on the earth during the reign of the "little horn."
- That some aspects of this vision may have dual significance, as occurs in other Scriptural texts (Hos 11:1/Matt 2:15; 2 Sam 7:11-16/Acts 2:30; Gen 17:7/Gal 3:29).

With these things in mind, I will proceed with the consideration of "the little horn." I will seek to accent revealed principle above details, Divine purpose above history, and the end of all things. Our aim is to capture the essence of the message.

THE LITTLE HORN

" 24b . . . and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."

There is such a solemn tone to this text that we dare not barge into it with a mere academic mind. Neither, indeed, must we seek to justify any preconceived notions by means of this text. Our immediate objective must be to perceive the overall picture here, and not be drawn into considerations that do not edify.

When we ponder a personality speaking great words against the God of heaven, wearing out the saints, and thinking to change times and laws, we are in an area demanding great soberness of mind. We must be willing to thrust from our minds all humanly conceived theological views, for which God has no tolerance. We must also approach this text with the clear revelation of the Gospel in mind, else we will be diverted to the consideration of lesser things.

Since the greatest revelation of God is found in Christ Jesus, in whom dwells "all fulness" (Col 1:19; 2:19), this text must be seen in view of Him – with the light of His countenance shining upon it. Also, our understanding of God, as clarified in the Son, must be the light that illumines this passage. As it is written, "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light" (Psa 36:9).

I have taken the time to make these brief comments because of the prominence and popularity of various human views of this passage. I suggest we must come to Scriptural texts with a certain disdain for preconceived notions.

ANOTHER SHALL RISE

“. . . and another shall rise after them . . .” Another version reads, “After them another king will arise,” NIV This is the explanation of “the little horn.”

The expression “after these ”does not suggest the “little horn” comes into being after the rise and fall of the kings depicted by the “ten horns.” Later this king will be said to displace three of the other ten kings. Thus “after these” means after these kings had been established, or the ten divisions of the fourth-beast-kingdom had been put into place. Therefore, we may look for the beginning of this king while the fourth kingdom was in power. Yet, it will assume the priority over all other divisions of that kingdom.

DIVERSE FROM THE FIRST

“. . . and he shall be diverse from the first . . .” Other versions read, “different from the first ones,” NKJV “different from the previous ones,” NASB “different from the earlier ones,” NIV and “different from the former ones.” NRSV

The ten kings depicted by the ten horns, were much the same. They governed different areas, but did so in the same manner. They carried out a single will and purpose. This king, however, would be distinctive from all the others. He would operate under different principles, and with a different agenda in mind. He would be as different from the other kings, as the fourth kingdom was from the other three kingdoms.

This “king” would rise while the other kings were in place, but eventually would outlast them all. Thus the various versions refer to the kings in the past tense: “first,” “previous,” “earlier,” and “former.”

In this “little horn” we will see the establishment of a different kind of rule. It will be ruthless, yet be different in both form and purpose.

HE SHALL SUBDUE THREE KINGS

“. . . and he shall subdue three kings . . .” Other versions read, “shall put down three kings,” NRSV “shall bring down three kings,” DOUAY “will bring low three kings,” TNK and “three kings it

humbleth.” YLT

The rule, therefore, of this power will be at the expense of other rulers. It will fill up the territory formerly dominated by others.

The way in which this kingdom expanded does not appear to be only force, as characterized the four beasts. It was growth that appears to have uprooted three other horns. That is, as the influence of this ruler spread, the influence of others was displaced – as opposed to an aggressive attempt to overthrow them.

I gather the reason for this circumstance was the difference of the rule of the “little horn.” The fourth beast was different from all the others, and was thus described as becoming more prominent than them. So the “little horn” is different from the other horns, and thus becomes more influential than they were.

A Principle

A principle to be seen here is that in order to rise above peers, there must be a difference . This is one of the things that accounts for the ultimate triumph of Christ’s kingdom: it is “not of this world” (John 18:36). It differs from the entire world order. Because of this, it is inevitable that a confrontation of the kingdom of Christ and the kingdoms of this world will occur. When that happens, Christ’s kingdom will swallow them up.

Thus it is with this “little horn.” The difference between it and the other horns is so significant that ultimately they cannot coexist.

There are, therefore, two circumstances that will not be set forth in this vision.

- First , the “little horn” will NOT bear rule in the same manner as the other kings . It will operate on different principles, and be a different kind of kingdom -, i.e., “diverse from the first ones.”
- Second , the kingdom of God, particularly as governed by the exalted Christ, will never assume the characteristics of a worldly kingdom .

These observations are fundamental to a proper understanding of the book of Daniel. The perception of the second remark is essential to the understanding of the future of God’s people. Our theology must not be allowed to take a sudden turn toward the world at the end of time. Yet, in spite of this, a significant amount of contemporary theology views eschatology, or the study of last things, from a purely earthly point of view. While there are, indeed, several prophecies of disturbances in both nature and worldly kingdoms toward the end of time, the kingdom of God itself remains essentially “not

of this world.”

Who are the Three Kings?

We are not provided the identity of the three kings, or the specific time in which they existed.

Some have surmised that the “little horn” is Julius Caesar, and that the three displaced kings were Lepidus, Antony, and Octavius. CALVIN This persuasion sees Julius Caesar as a “little horn” because he did not assume the title of “king.” The difficulty with this view is that this did not make him “diverse from the first.” In this view, he remained essentially the same as the other kings. I see this as contradictory of the passage.

Another view sees “the little horn” as a depiction of the popedom, or the rise of the pope and papal powers. In this view the three kings are identified as follows. (1) Ravenna, given to pope Stephen II by Pepin, king of France, in A.D. 755. (2) The kingdom of the Lombards, given to pope St. Peter by Charlemagne in A.D. 774. (3) The state of Rome, vested in pope Adrian I, in spiritual and temporal matters, and confirmed to him by Lewis the pious. ADAM CLARKE I am inclined to this view, persuaded “the little horn” is more a role than a particular person.

A Religio-Political Power

In summary, I perceive “the little horn” as a new kind of authority or power. In it there is a merging of religion and the principles of earthly government. In that strange conglomeration the earth becomes more prominent, while spiritual power is claimed. This is the same kind of imagery presented in the book of Revelation.

After depicting the church as “a woman” (Rev 12:1,4,6,13-17), another woman is introduced. This one is a harlot, riding upon the beast of worldly government – i.e., carried along by worldly principles. The beast was full of names of blasphemy, and had “ten horns,” just like the fourth beast of Daniel. The woman riding the beast was decked with all manner of royal clothing, precious stones, and pearls – elsewhere portrayed as related to the saints (Rev 7:13-14; 21:19,21). However, she had a cup in her hand from which she drank, and it was “full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.” The name written upon her forehead was “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev 17:3-5). She was also “drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Rev 17:6). The imagery of a harlot speaks of being identified with Christ, yet prostituting her affection by an alliance with the world. Spiritual harlotry is not a view of the world apart from Christ, but of professed believers who choose to be re-aligned with the world.

The difference between this “woman” and the “little horn” is this. The “little horn” is the one through whom this atrocity was formed. The “woman” is the dominion, or result of the influence of the

“little horn.”

HE SHALL SPEAK AGAINST THE MOST HIGH

“And he shall speak great words against the most High . . .” Other versions read, “He shall speak pompous words against the Most High,” NKJV “And he will speak out against the Most High,” NASB “he will insult the Most High,” NJB “He will defy the Most High,” NLT and “words as an adversary of the Most High it doth speak.” YLT

On this passage, Jerome (A.D. 370) quoted Symmachus (translator of the Old Testament during the second century) as saying, “He shall speak as if he were God.” CLARKE That is a very arresting observation!

The idea here is that of lifting ones

self up to a place of prominence, claiming the prerogatives of God. This is the attitude attributed to Satan himself. “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isa 14:13-14). Rather than speaking derisively of the Person of God, this is the sin of seeking to be equal or above Him.

It is not speaking against God like Pharaoh (Ex 5:2) or Sennacherib (2 Chron 32:15). Rather speaking as though the offending person stood in the place of God, presuming to represent Him and deliver His message. This is viewed as defying the Lord, boasting oneself against Him, and speaking great words against Him. Those who usurp Divine offices are viewed by heaven as blasphemers, for they have assumed a role that only God can give.

In this regard, there are a number of things said of popery (office of the pope) that confirm the seriousness of the transgression of that position. These are all taken from official Catholic resources.

- Beginning in the eighth century, the pope was officially called “the vicar of Christ.” BRITANNICA 2002 The word “vicar” means “one serving as substitute or agent. MIRRIAM-WEBSTER
- How to address the pope. “The question often arises on how we should address the pope. The answer is simple, with only a few options: ‘Dear Holy Father,’ (or) ‘Your Holiness.’” From “Protocol,” from “The True Catholic Church” home page (<http://www.truecatholic.org>).

- “Some titles for the pope include Holy Father - Saint Ignatius of Antioch said that the pope is like the living image of God; Bishop of Rome - direct line of succession from Peter, the first Bishop of Rome; and Supreme Pontiff - from the Latin, a bridge builder, the connector between God and humans. John Paul II is the 264th head of the Catholic Church since Saint Peter.” from “Structure of the Catholic Church,” published by St Justin Martyr Roman Catholic Church (http://www.sjm87.org/structure_of_the_catholic_church.htm).
- More official titles of the pope. “Vicar of Jesus Christ, Supreme Pontiff, Successor of St, Peter, Prince of the Apostles, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, and Sovereign of the State of Vatican City.” from “The Messenger,” published “with Ecclesiastical Approbation.”
- “The Pope, the Vicar of Christ on earth, is the official representative of Christ. No one in the Church ranks above him in power and honor. He is the supreme teacher, lawgiver, and sanctifier. When the Pope, speaking officially as head of the Church, solemnly defines matters of faith and morals, he is infallible.” from “The Messenger,” published “with Ecclesiastical Approbation.”

Quotations from the Roman Catholic Catechism

- “The Pope is the Head of the Church. ‘For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.’” Verification: (#882, p. 254)
- “The Pope is the Supreme Pastor and Teacher. ‘The Roman Pontiff...as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful.’” Verification: (#891, p. 256) .
- “The Pope has Ultimate Power Over Every Soul. ‘The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls.’” Verification: (#937, p.267). "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered.” Verification: (#882, p. 254)

Sundry Quotations

- “The pope is of so great dignity and so exalted that he is not a mere man ... he is as it were God on earth, sole sovereign of the faithful of Christ, chief of kings, having plenitude of power.” -Lucius Ferraris, *Prompta Bibliotheca*, 1763, Volume VI, 'Papa II', pp.25-29.
- “The supreme teacher in the Church is the Roman Pontiff. Union of minds, therefore, requires complete submission and obedience of will to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff, as to God Himself.” -Leo VIII, *On the Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens*», Encyclical letter, 1890
- “The Savior Himself is the door of the sheepfold: ‘I am the door of the sheep.’ Into this fold of Jesus Christ, no man may enter unless he be led by the Sovereign Pontiff; and only if they be united to him can men be saved, for the Roman Pontiff is the Vicar of Christ and His personal

representative on earth.” (Pope John XXIII in his homily to the Bishops and faithful assisting at his coronation on November 4, 1958).

- "We define that the Holy Apostolic See (the Vatican) and the Roman Pontiff hold the primacy over the whole world."-A Decree of the Council of Trent, quoted in Philippe Labbe and Gabriel Cossart, "The Most Holy Councils," col. 1167

Just Like the Devil

There may be some who feel it is unduly critical to draw attention to these things. This only confirms the effect of this departure from the faith. When men arrogate to themselves names, responsibilities, and authority that God has revealed belongs to Him and His Son, a transgression of unspeakable magnitude has been committed. This is precisely the transgression for which Satan was expelled from heaven (Isa 14:12-15).

I understand that some are of the opinion that the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah has nothing to do with the devil himself. Because Isaiah's word was addressed to the king of Babylon, it is thought it could have nothing to do with Satan. However, such thinking is flawed to the core. The king of Babylon had taken upon himself the traits of the devil, and the devil was at work in him. Therefore, he was addressed as though he was Satan himself.

This is not an isolated incident in Scripture. On one occasion Jesus called Peter "Satan" (Matt 16:23). He did so because Peter had taken a fleshly view of His death, and was doubtless under Satan's influence when he objected to our Lord's reference to His imminent death and resurrection (Matt 16:21).

On another occasion, Jesus told His disciples one among them was "a devil" (John 6:70). Regarding this verse, every translation reads "devil." The reason is because Jesus used the word **dia,bolo,j** (di-ab-o-los), a term applied to Satan. It is used in Scripture forty times. Thirty-seven of them apply exclusively to Satan. Two of them are translated "false accusers," and are ascribed to those who have Satan's characteristic of slandering (1 Tim 3:11; 2 Tim 3:3). In both of these cases, the word used is an adjective. Yet, in John 6:70 Jesus refers to Peter as "Satan" – in the noun form. He does not speak of an expression, like "false accusers" (1 Tim 3:11; 2 Tim 3:3).

To this very day the devil transforms himself into "an angel of light," taking to himself Divine traits, and thus deceiving the people (2 Cor 11:14).

Summation

The "little horn," in my understanding is corrupt religious power that attempts to come in the name of Christ, yet functions according to the principles of the world. It answers to Paul's vivid

description, “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess 2:4). It also reminds us of John’s vision on Patmos. “And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven” (Rev 13:6).

This type of power was embodied in the office of the pope, but has not been confined there. It rose from the ashes of Imperial Rome. It differed from all powers previous to it, for it was a combination of spiritual and secular power. It made claim to have power over both realms.

The nature of this spiritual tyranny has penetrated into every part of the Christian world, not at all being confined to Roman Catholicism. It is found in Christian educational institutions, local congregations, within the eldership, and among church boards. There is hardly a person who hungers and thirsts after righteousness that has not, in some way, confronted ecclesiastical power. The landscape of Christianity is cluttered with the wreckage of souls who have been bludgeoned by the institution, and cut out of the work they love. Those who labor for Christ have consistently found their greatest opponents to be religious in nature – those whose wretched occupations and powers were threatened by a quest for the truth and a refusal to settle for spiritual chaff.

HE SHALL WEAR OUT THE SAINTS

“ . . . and shall wear out the saints of the most High . . . ” Other versions read, “shall persecute the saints,” NKJV “ Wear down the saints,” NASB “ oppress His saints,” NIV “attempting to put an end to the saints,” BBE “ crush the saints,” DOUAY “ torment the holy ones,” NJB and “ harass the holy ones.” TNK

The words are most arresting! Here is a power that not only wages war against the people of God, but prevails over them. It is a persecuting power that will not allow for the love of the truth, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, or pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. If people assert themselves Godward, they will be opposed by this power.

We will find history filled with all manner of wars, campaigns, inquisitions, persecutions, and slaughter of the godly.

The Inquisition

During the twelfth century, the Roman Catholic Church officially established “The Inquisition” (INQUISITIO HERETIC). The function of this inquisition was to seek out and punish heretics and unbelievers. This inquisition was implemented in several different stages. The following facts were taken from Grollier’s Encyclopedia. These atrocities have been acknowledged by recent popes after having been denied for centuries. The present pope made a public confession of these, and other, sins.

- The episcopal Inquisition. Papal documents as well as the Second, Third, and Fourth Lateran councils (1139, 1179, 1215) prescribed imprisonment and confiscation of property as punishment for heresy and threatened to excommunicate princes who failed to punish heretics.
- The papal Inquisition was instituted by Pope Gregory IX in 1231. “Gregory ordered convicted heretics to be seized by the secular authorities and burned.” This Inquisition extended to Germany, Italy, France, Portugal, Spain, and England. Interrogation involved such painful procedures as “stretching of limbs on the rack, burning with live coals, squeezing of fingers and toes, or the strappado, a vertical rack.” This inquisition lasted into the reign of Queen Mary I of England (1553-1558) – an astounding period of over 325 years!
- The Spanish Inquisition. Pope Sixtus IV endorsed this separate Inquisition in 1483. This period of severe oppression was finally suppressed in Spain in 1834, and Portugal in 1821 – lasting a period of 351 years.
- The Roman Inquisition. Under the leadership of Pope Paul III, this Inquisition was solidified during the Reformation, in 1588, by Sixtus V into the “Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition,” also known as the “Holy Office.” It was reorganized in 1908 under the title “Congregation of the Holy Office.” Again, as late as 1965, it was reorganized by Pope Paul VI “as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,” with the more positive task of furthering right doctrine rather than censuring heresy.” Thus, from 1588 through 1965 this Inquisition received papal sanction – a period of 377 years.
- Thus the Inquisition continued from 1139, at the latest, to 1965 – 836 years! Compare this with the period covered by persecutions from Imperial Rome – 64 thru 313, or 249 years . And there were periods during that time when the persecution was relaxed. The professed church has been more ruthless than the world!
- Of this dark period of Christian history, secular writer Karlfried Froehlich said, “. . . the Inquisition has been cited as a prime example of what is thought to be the barbarism of the Middle Ages. In its day there was some popular sympathy for the Inquisition. Some saw it as a political and economic tool, others, as a necessary defense for religious belief. Nevertheless, despite all efforts at understanding the institution in the light of social, political, religious, and ideological factors, today the Inquisition is generally admitted to belong to the darker side of Christian history.”
GROLLIERS ENCYCLOPEDIA, 1998
- One of the most extensive encyclopedias of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, is McClintok and Strong’s Cyclopedia. This work includes twenty-two pages on the Inquisition.

Additional Religious Persecutions

In addition to the Inquisition, Fox’s Book of Martyrs lists the following papal persecutions.

- Persecutions in Italy under the Papacy.
- Persecutions in Bohemia under the papacy.
- Persecutions in Germany as the result of Luther's teachings.
- Persecutions in the Netherlands.
- Persecutions of the French Protestants.

There is documented numbers of 14,000,000 people who were martyred during this dark period of church history. Some say that around 50,000,000 were killed in persecutions launched in the name of Jesus.

The Dark Ages

During all of these persecutions the "Dark Ages" dominated for a millennium, from the fifth century through the fifteenth century. This period is also referred to as "The Middle Ages." The entirety of civilization was impacted by this period of time. It was evidenced in barbarism and hedonism. All of the arts, from literature to painting, reflected the darkness of this period, with few pockets of light. This period reached its peak "after the collapse of Roman civilization to the period of the Renaissance in the fifteenth century" BRITANNICA 2002 – a period during with Roman Catholicism virtually ruled the world.

Daniel was given to see this whole period from a heavenly point of view. With all of these things in mind, hear the text again. "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High" (Dan 7:25).

I do not presume to say this exhausts the text. However, there are too many occurrences that parallel our text for them to be mere coincidence.

HE SHALL THINK TO CHANGE TIMES AND LAWS

" . . . and think to change times and laws . . ." Other versions read, "And shall intend to change times and law," NKJV "he will intend to make alterations in times and in law," NASB "try and change the set times and the laws," NIV "attempt to change sacred seasons and the law," NRSV and "he shall think himself able to change times and laws." DOUAY

Some have referred this to the Roman Caesars who abrogated traditional heathen feasts,

changing calendars, and overthrowing what was customary in the world. However, it appears to me that such an interpretation conflicts sharply with the nature of revelation. God has nowhere played the role of an historical analyst of the affairs of this world. Nor, indeed, does he behold the activities of men without due regard for His own eternal purpose. When such men as Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Pilate, Herod, and the likes are mentioned in Scripture, it is not from a human point of view. If someone were to inquire concerning their methodology of government, or their personal philosophy of ruling the people, they would be hard pressed to find any satisfactory information in Scripture. That is simply not the approach of the Holy Spirit.

If this trait of “the little horn” has no relation to the kingdom of God – the kingdom that was given to the Son, and will be given to the saints – I suggest it has no place in Scripture. Such an approach to the affairs of men is never taken in the Word of God. For example, of the united and organized people in the “land of Shinar,” we know nothing, UNTIL they conspired to make a name for themselves, ignoring the fact and presence of the Living God (Gen 11:2-7). The same is true of Pharaoh. We know nothing of his style of rule or the affairs of his government, until the time came for the deliverance of Israel. So far as the Scriptures are concerned, Pilate and Herod were non-entities until “the Word became flesh.”

I therefore conclude that the “seasons” and “laws” in question had to do with Divine prerogatives – “seasons” and “laws” that He had given. On this subject, I feel a statement made by Dodd encapsulates the whole matter. “Appointing fasts and feasts; canonizing persons whom he chooses to call saints; granting pardons and indulgences for sins; instituting new modes of worship utterly unknown to the Christian Church; new articles of faith; new rules of practice; and reversing, with pleasure, the laws both of God and man.” Quoted by CLARKE

Under the influence of the papacy, a new order of religion commenced. It endeavored to combine the lifeless ceremonies of Judaism, the idolatry of the heathen world, the principles of government employed by the world, and the Gospel of Christ. Laws concerning meats were passed. Contrary to the word of Jesus (Matt 20:25-26), final authority was invested in men. Mary was exalted to a place of equality with Jesus. Prayers were directed to everyone from angels to departed saints. Sins were remitted by ritual in indulgences and the mass. Oral tradition was exalted to a place of equality with Scripture. Also, the church became the chief authority rather than the Lord Jesus, who is the Head of the church.

Men have learned to live with such things, but they represent a most serious departure from “sound doctrine” and justifying faith. Paul referred to such changes when he wrote, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (1 Tim 4:1-3).

THE SAINTS GIVEN INTO HIS HAND

“ . . . and they shall be given into his hand . . . ” Other versions read, “and the saints will be given into his hands,” BBE “and they shall be delivered into his hand,” DOUAY “saints will be handed over to him,” NJB and “they will be placed under his control. ” NLT

Here we come into an area where human understanding dries up like the proverbial potsherd. We must stand before this text and acknowledge, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom 11:33). The book of Daniel has already told us that authority comes from God. It is He who sets up kings and removes them. He gave authority to Nebuchadnezzar. He transferred authority from Belshazzar to Darius. Now the saints are given into the hands of this despot.

The Scriptures contain other depictions of this kind of action. These are not pleasant consideration.

- The Lord “delivered” Israel “into the hands of Midian” (Judges 6:1), into the hands of “spoilers” (Judges 2:14), into the hands of Syrian kings (2 Kgs 13:3), and “into the hand of the Philistines for forty years” (Judges 13:1).
- Of the “beast” in Revelation 13, it is written, “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them : and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations ” (Rev 13:5-7).
- Concerning the rapid rise of spiritual corruption, it is written, “For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled” (Rev 17:17).

The success, therefore, of “the little horn” was not owing to his wisdom and power. He would have forever remained “little” had it not been for the dispensation of God. Just as surely Satan could not have touched righteous Job without the permission of the God of heaven, so this monstrous and corrupt power could never have worn out the saints if they had not been given into his hand.

The knowledge of such things can assist the people of God to endure all manner of hardship and difficulty – things that would ordinarily overcome them. Just as the mysterious “little horn” was not in ultimate control over the saints, so our adversaries, including the devil himself, are not lords over us.

Why Does God Do Such Things?

Men have struggled with statements such as this text. However, there is no justification for staggering at them. God has revealed enough of Himself and His ways so that we should be able to reason soundly about these things. I will put before you at least three considerations. I do not doubt there are many more. All of them postulate a righteous God, the limited power of our enemies, and the temporality of life in this world.

- First, there is the matter of chastening. Just as Israel was chastened by Nebuchadnezzar, so it is possible that the saints are depicted as chastened by this power. Perhaps they had left their first love like the church at Ephesus (Rev 2:4). It is possible that they were allowing doctrinal corruption among themselves like the church at Pergamos (Rev 2:14), or the church at Thyatira (Rev 2:20). Perhaps they had become dead like the church in Sardis (Rev 3:1), or lukewarm like the church in Laodicea (Rev 3:16). Such conditions may be glossed by men, but they are never overlooked by God!
- Second, there may have been some behind-the-scenes activity like there was in the time of Job. It is possible that the devil, frustrated by the consistent defeats the powers of darkness suffered at the hands of believers, had maligned them. Perhaps he had suggested that a long term persecution would bring a sure end to the church, forever removing it from the earth.
- Third, the people of God are the light of the world, but they are also a “spectacle to angels” (1 Cor 4:9). There is a vast host of angelic spirits who are daily ministering to the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:13-14). They behold their going out and coming in. They long to look more deeply into the powerful Gospel they have embraced (1 Pet 1:12). The Lord is showing them His “manifold wisdom” “through the church” (Eph 3:10). Perhaps in the crucible of extended suffering, this holy host have been able to see aspects of God never before conceived.

Whether for these or other reasons, God has “done nothing without cause” (Ezek 14:23). Whatever one may think of this period, it is not the conclusion of things. The saints will rise from this period of oppression, and will take the kingdom! This is only a temporary situation, and is under the strict control of Almighty God.

A Word to Tribulationists

In our time, there is a wave of fear being created by the threat of a great tribulation. All manner of books and visual media have been created to promote this fear. But what do such people have to say about this text? We are faced with the staggering success of those who hate the saints. They not only wage war against God’s people, they prevail. Is there a reasonable person who assumes all of this was easy for the saints, and that ready answers were on the tip of their tongues? The millions of martyrs whose blood was shed for the word of their testimony – do they leave no message for us? If there was not another text in all of Scripture but this one, it would forever stop the mouths of doomsday prophets. Rather than bringing a message of hope to the saints such teachers have themselves been conquered by the wicked one. They have no right to traffic among the saints! They are more closely aligned with the “little horn,” “the beast,” and the “harlot” of Revelation, than with the God of heaven.

TIME, TIMES, AND HALF A TIME

“ . . . until a time and times and the dividing of time” (Dan 7:25). Considering “time” to stand for a year, as it did in Nebuchadnezzar’s chastening, this would stand for three and a half years (“time” = 1 year, “times” = two years, “dividing of time” = ½ year). It is not unusual to hear people assign this interpretation to the passage, developing from it all manner of views concerning the tribulation, mid-tribulation, and the likes. However, that appears to me to be too simplistic, and to allow too much credit to be given to human wisdom.

Time, Times, and the Divine of Time

Daniel later mentions this same measure of time. “And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half ; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished” (Dan 12:7).

The same period is mentioned in the Revelation, where it is also associated with the oppression of the saints. “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time , from the face of the serpent” (Rev 12:14).

1,260 Days

This period of time can also be expressed in terms of days. Taking the Hebrew average of thirty days a month, three and a half years translates into 1,260 days ($3\frac{1}{2} \times 12 \times 30 = 1,260$).

This period is mentioned in the Revelation as a time of subdued testimony, when God’s two witnesses prophesy in sackcloth. “And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days , clothed in sackcloth” (Rev 11:3).

It is also a period assigned to the sustaining of the church under adverse circumstances, and during an oppressive time. “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days ” (Rev 12:6).

Forty-Two Months

This period can also be viewed as months. In this case, it would be forty-two months ($3\frac{1}{2} \times 12 = 42$).

This is also mentioned in the Revelation, and is also related to the oppression of God’s people.

“But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months ” (Rev 11:2).

Again, the Revelation reveals a foe of the church who also had a blasphemous mouth, and who was allowed to continue for forty-two months. “And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months ” (Rev 13:5).

A Recap

Thus we have seen this period of time from six different vantage points, all of which have to do with the oppression of the saints. It is exceedingly difficult to believe all of these texts reflect the same time period by mere coincidence, or that there is no Divine pattern in them.

- The “little horn” will prevail over the saints for this period (Dan 7:25).
- It is during this time that the “holy people” will be allowed to be scattered (Dan 12:7).
- There will be a subdued witness of the truth of God for this time (Rev 11:3).
- The saints will be forced to flee from the old serpent, yet will be nourished in a special place for this length of time (Rev 12:6).
- The holy city will be trodden under foot for this period (Rev 11:2).
- An opponent of God’s people will be given a blasphemous mouth, and will continue for this time (Rev 13:5).

SOME CONCLUSIONS

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from this text. All of them assume some mystery in the text, but not total obscurity.

- This is a prophesy of a period of time in which the truth is corrupted.
- Consequently, it is a time when the saints of God suffer.
- During this time, it will appear as though the enemies of the saints have triumphed over them, and there is no hope of recovery.

- The period of time during which truth is perverted and the saints are oppressed is lengthy.
- Although the period is lengthy, it is strictly controlled by God, and will conclude at His appointed time.
- The time of reference had no effect at all upon the determined destiny of the saints – to take the kingdom.
- It is a time characterized by change, carnal power, and the subduing of truth.
- During this period, it will be difficult to declare the truth.
- This is a time when nourishment will be more private than public.
- It is a time when the people of God will be more scattered and less localized.
- It is long by reason of experience: “one thousand, two hundred, and threescore days .”
- It is a period that will be Divinely interrupted: “time, times, and the dividing of time.”
- It will be in manageable periods, with some measure of relief: “forty and two months.”

A Summation

It should not require a lot of thought to see a phenomenal number of parallels with our own day. Where is there a lover of the truth that is not aware of the unpopularity of that truth within the professed church? Who is the person hungering and thirsting for righteousness that has not experienced the need for isolation from the affairs of this world? Is there any individual who is pressing toward the mark who has not sensed the treading down of the city of truth, the pummeling of the saints of God, and the erosion of spiritual values?

We are, in my judgment, living in the wake of the “little horn.” I do not question that another despot is on the horizon – one who will oppress the saints. But the pioneer of oppression has already come, setting the stage for the ungodly conglomeration of the church and the world, the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world, and the attempted merger of worldly values with spiritual life.

All such compounds are admixtures, and no ultimate good can come from them. And it all started in an organized manner when corruption crept into church leadership. It happened precisely as Paul

said it would. “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30).

This is a time to be sober and vigilant, to be knowledgeable and filled with faith and hope. It is not the time to sleep.

DOMINION TAKEN AWAY

“ 26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.”

Here again is that glorious Divine disjunctive: “BUT!” The circumstance appears hopeless. Power appears to be only with the foe. The saints appear to be losing the battle. And it has all continued for a long time – time enough to dry up pretended hope and feigned faith. Empty profession cannot survive such an onslaught! Dead religion is soon washed away under such lengthy oppression. Those who have no appetite for the truth will soon go their preferred way.

Such trials are times of sifting – to get rid of the pretenders. That is precisely why Paul said of the disruptions at Corinth, “For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you” NASB (1 Cor 11:19).

Just as surely as Joshua and Caleb outlasted the blast of the desert and the trial of forty years of time, so the true saints of God will survive the assault of the “little horn.” His power will only last as long as it takes for the impostors to fall in the wilderness! As soon as the threshing floor has been purged of its chaff (Matt 3:12), this despotic reign will conclude, abruptly and without hand!

THE JUDGMENT SHALL SIT

“But the judgment shall sit . . .” Other versions read, “the court shall; be seated,” NKJV “the court will sit for judgment,” NASB and “the court will pass judgment.” NLT

The seemingly invincible “little horn” will not be cast down by a military campaign, but by “judgment.” His despotic reign will be brought to an end by a decision. He will be slain by “breath,” or a “spirit,” and not by sword (2 Thess 2:8). His end will come by means of a “mouth,” just as surely as his reign had been characterized by a boasting “mouth.” As soon as the court is seated, it will take place.

While there very well may be periods in history when this appeared to take place, it will ultimately take place when the saints “judge the world” (1 Cor 6:2). We know this is the case from the verses that follow.

THEY SHALL TAKE AWAY HIS DOMINION

“ . . . and they shall take away his dominion . . . ” The “they” are the saints, to whom judgment has been given, and who will possess the kingdom (7:22). The power and dominion of this usurping power will be stripped from him. The power that was given to him will be wrested from his grasp, and there will be nothing he will be able to do about it. And it will all happen with a judgment, a pronouncement, if you please, from “the court.” As Daniel says in another place, “but he shall be broken without hand” (8:25) – that is, without any display of overt power.

Thus his oppression of the saints will quickly conclude. The changing of times and seasons will come to a grinding halt. His blasphemy will be put to silence, and his boasting forever stopped. Instead of him causing the uprooting of other kingdoms, he himself will be uprooted by the kingdom that has no end!

CONSUMED AND DESTROYED

“ . . . to consume and to destroy it unto the end.” Other versions read, “ annihilated and destroyed forever,” NASB “ completely destroyed forever,” NIV “to be consumed and totally destroyed,” NRSV “to overcome it and send complete destruction on it,” BBE “and be broken in pieces, and perish even to the end,” DOUAY “to abolish it, and to destroy it utterly” Septuagint “finally destroyed and reduced to nothing,” NJB and “ they cause to pass away, to cut off, and to destroy - unto the end.” YLT This is certainly not the language of a temporary defeat.

When the fourth beast was destroyed, the other three were “were prolonged for a season and a time” (7:12). However, no such allowance will be given to the “little horn.” It will be utterly removed. That is, it will never rise again, for there is no more life in it.

It should be apparent that this judgment has not yet occurred. First, corrupt religion is still with us. Second, the judgment has not yet been made in favor of the saints, transferring the power and dominion to them. Those who imagine this has already taken place need to read the text again. The statements are too large to be figurative, or a depiction of lesser things. There is a note of finality in it that simply cannot occur within the framework of time.

THE KINGDOM AND DOMINION GIVEN TO THE SAINTS

“ 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.”

This is now the third time in this chapter that the kingdom is said to be given to the saints.

- “But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever” (Dan 7:18).
- “Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (Dan 7:22).
- “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High” (Dan 7:27).

There is nothing here about reigning for a thousand years. Rather, this reign is “for ever, even for ever and ever.” There is no partial or introductory reign here. The kingdom itself is “possessed” by the saints.

THE KINGDOM, DOMINION, AND GREATNESS

“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven . . .” Other versions read, “Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven,” NASB “The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven,” NRSV and “kingship and rule and the splendors of all the kingdoms under heaven.” NJB

In this text, is any part of the kingdom withheld from the saints? Kingship will be given to them. Dominion, or authority, will be given to them. The greatness, or full expanse, of the kingdom will be given to them. All of the splendor and glory of the kingdom will be given to them. There will be no question about who has received it. There will be no kings incognito as there is now. No competing influences will exist, but all opponents will be put down by judgment!

Let others haggle about an earthly millennium. Let them argue among themselves how long it will last, and how lengthy the tribulation will be, and how extensive the reign of Antichrist will be. I do not care to become embroiled in such prognostications. They are not far-reaching enough. They are too close to time and too far from eternity!

I have a mind to consider the lot of the saints AFTER the demise of their opponents. I desire to know what will take place AFTER they have received the kingdom in its entirety, with all of its power and glory. And if, perchance, there is some poor soul who insists all of this has happened already, I am quite willing to let that soul's daily experience confirm it does not yet possess all of the power and glory of all the kingdoms of this world!

The Devil Offered this to Jesus

It is worth noting that this is precisely what the devil offered Jesus in the wilderness temptation. "And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine" (Luke 4:5-7).

What a foolish offer! Jesus now possesses all of the kingdoms, and that condition will be revealed when He comes again (2 Tim 4:1). What is more, the time is coming when the saints – all those in Christ Jesus – will also possess it. They will "sit" with Him in His throne, just as He said (Rev 3:21). They will "inherit the earth," just as He said (Matt 5:5). They will "inherit all things," just as Jesus said (Rev 21:7). They will be given "power over the nations," just as He said (Rev 2:26).

GIVEN TO THE PEOPLE OF THE SAINTS

" . . . shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom . . ." Other versions read, "the people, the saints," NKJV and "the saints, the people." NIV

"The people" are the ones recognized and honored by God. The world gave honor to the beasts and the little horn, but they were not "the people." The "saints," or holy ones, were "the people." As for the rest of humanity, particularly those adversarial kingdoms, they were "not a people" (1 Pet 2:10). They never were "the people," even though they appeared to be. Further, the saints were always "the people," even though they did not appear to be.

Now, they are given the kingdom that was received by the "Son of man" – and it is "an everlasting kingdom," just as they were promised. Thus will the word of Peter be fulfilled: "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:11).

The Lord will say to all who are not in Christ, and especially to the presumptuous and boastful

“little horn,” “I NEVER knew you” (Matt 7:23). But to the saints, He will speak as He did to Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee” (Jer 1:5). Blessed contemplation!

ALL DOMINIONS SHALL SERVE AND OBEY HIM

“ . . . and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” Other versions read, “and all rulers will worship and obey Him,” NIV “and all dominions shall serve and obey THEM,” NRSV,ESV,TNK “and all powers will be His servants and do His pleasure,” BBE and “whom every empire will serve and obey.” NJB

This refers to the same time as is heralded in the Revelation. “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15). That is, they will manifestly become His. He is ruling over them at this present time, removing kings and raising them up He wills.

Several versions (NRSV, ESV, TNK) read that all dominions will “serve and obey THEM” – that is, the saints. Others read they will serve “Him,” that is, the Son of man. Both statements are true, for the saints will be sitting with Him in His throne, reigning “with” Him, as it is written (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 3:21; 20:6). However, as the verse continues, it becomes apparent that the Son Himself is intended.

And who are the “rulers,” “dominions,” “powers,” and “rulers” that will serve Him? Are we to understand these are the inimical powers that oppressed the saints? Will ungodly nations still exist at this time? Some do believe this is the case, but they are wrong.

Remember, the saints receive the kingdom and reign without interruption for ever, even for ever and ever. This is an eternal consequence, not a temporal one.

At this time – when judgment has been finalized and the saints come to possess the kingdom – there are no other powers. No kingdoms remain to be subdued, and there are no adversarial dominions. Judgment has been passed in favor of the saints. The kingdom, in its entirety, has been given to them, and now they possess it. The saints are the ones who will serve and obey the Lord forever, as it stated elsewhere. “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in His temple : and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them” (Rev 7:15). “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him ” (Rev 22:3).

Thus we have been projected to the end of time, when all “rule and all authority and all power” has been “put down” (1 Cor 15:24). This is the time when God will “bruise Satan” under our “feet” (Rom 16:20), and we will come into our “eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15).

DANIEL PONDERES THE MATTER

“ 28 Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.”

If we, living in the blazing light of the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal 4:2) have been arrested by this marvelous vision, how must it have impacted Daniel, about 2,500 hundred years ago? How must this man of God have felt as he thought upon the vision he received in Babylon during the first year of riotous Belshazzar? We already know he was a sensitive man – sensitive to God. How must he have felt? We are not left to conjecture on the matter. Daniel tells us.

THE END OF THE MATTER

“Hitherto is the end of the matter . . . ” Other versions read, “This is the end of the account,” NKJV “At this point the revelation ended,” NASB “Here the account ends,” NRSV and “So far is the end of the matter. ” DARBY

Thus the current vision concluded. It appears from the beginning of the next chapter that two years lapsed before Daniel received another vision. “In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first” (Dan 8:1).

How this highlights the faith of this man “greatly beloved,” who lived under the twilight of the Law. Although he excelled in favor, and was an old man, seasoned in the faith, God still spoke to Him “at sundry times and in divers manners” (Heb 1:1). What faith and consistency he had. He was alert to hear from God, whether he was in the process of receiving a vision, or waiting during a two-year span for another word from God.

MY COGITATIONS

“As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me . . . ” Other versions read “thoughts.”

There are at least two Hebrew words for “thoughts.” The first is “machashabah,” and means plans, purpose, or even imaginations. This is a thought conceived by the person . It is used fifty-seven times in the Old Testament Scriptures.

The other word is “ra’yown,” and is used only nine times, six of them by Daniel (2:29,30; 4:19; 5:6,10; 7:28). Solomon uses it three times in Ecclesiastics (1:17; 2:22; 4:16). This word means “a grasp, mental conception, or cogitation.” This is not a thought conceived by the individual, but the consideration of something already made known to him, whether by circumstance or revelation.

Thus, Daniel did not consider the vision and begin dreaming up possibilities. He did not involve himself in endless speculations or the creation of various scenarios and possibilities. Rather, he deeply pondered what he had seen in the vision, and what had been explained to him by the angel. He thought upon what he already knew, yet did not fully understand.

And what was the affect of his “cogitations?” They caused him to be “much troubled.” Other versions read, “my thoughts greatly troubled me,” NKJV “my thoughts were greatly alarming me,” NASB “I, Daniel, was deeply troubled by my thoughts,” NIV and “my thoughts greatly terrified me.” NRSV

The prophet was disquieted by his thoughts – and he would not hear from God again for two years! He had seen violent kingdoms rise, trampling over men – and it troubled him. He had seen the violent displacement of kingdoms – and it troubled him. He had seen the rise of a blasphemous king who prevailed against the saints – and it troubled him. He saw this king speaking blasphemies against God – and it troubled him. He saw him attempting to change times and seasons – and it troubled him.

Blessed is the person who cannot remain indifferent when given to see the dominance of evil, even if it is a temporary situation! Such individuals can be entrusted with the truth of God.

MY COUNTENANCE CHANGED

“ . . . and my countenance changed in me . . . ” Other versions read, “my face grew pale,” NASB “my color changed,” RSV “the color went from my face,” BBE and “My face was pale with fear.” NLT

The truth had such a powerful impact upon Daniel that his flesh became disoriented. It was similar to the experience of Moses when the Lord’s glory was revealed at Sinai. At that time the servant of God said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling” NKJV (Heb 12:21). John had a similar experience when he saw the glorified Christ. He wrote, “I fell at His feet as dead” (Rev 1:17) – and he was a premier Apostle in the time of unparalleled revelation.

I must confess that I am suspicious of those who are so casual in the presence of the Lord, who can approach him with such commonness of speech and manners. I seriously doubt they are consciously in the presence of God at all.

I KEPT THE MATTER IN MY HEART

“ . . . but I kept the matter in my heart.” Other versions read, “I kept the matter to myself,” NASB and “but I kept the matter in my mind.” NRSV

Daniel did not go about sharing this vision with others. It was not his topic of conversation among any associates he might have had. This was something that was to be pondered. It was not yet time to tell it and “blaze abroad the matter.”

By cogitating on the things made known to him, Daniel would be better prepared to receive the next Divine installment – two years later, even though for the moment it was troubling.

CONCLUSION

Thus we conclude the epic of the seventh chapter of Daniel. It has again confirmed to us that this world, with all of its inequities, pride, and injustices, is still being governed by God, and He is doing so with a strict regard for and interest in the destiny of His people. As He works all things together for their good, His aim is not to make us comfortable in this world, but to bring us safely through it. The purpose is to arrive safely in glory.

The destiny of the saints of God has been affirmed, and in no uncertain words. As well, we have learned of the ultimate demise of all earthly powers, and the possession of all dominions by the saints of God. The fact that God revealed these things about five hundred years before Christ confirms they are matters He wants His people to know. They have an immediate bearing upon the strength and consistency of both faith and hope. Therefore, let us be up and acquainting ourselves with them.

DANIEL'S SECOND VISION, THE RAM AND THE HE GOAT #1

Lesson #24 INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the Babylonian captivity, circumstances for the chosen people radically changed. Things were never quite the same after that. The last mentioned king of Israel was Hoshea (2 Kgs 18:10 – 729-720 B.C.). The last recorded king of Judah was Zedekiah, made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (1 Kgs 24:17 – 597-586 B.C.). To this day, they have never again had a king. The records suggest the Babylonian captivity cured Israel of its dreadful propensity to idolatry. The details of its elimination are not provided, but from the end of that captivity on, idolatry was spoken of only in the past tense (Mal 2:11). Zechariah, who prophesied during the completion of Zerubbabel's temple, said, "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land" (Zech 13:2). Later, during the time of Malachi, cold and lifeless religion settled in among the Jews, with the profaning of the altars and the robbery of God by not paying tithes (Mal 1:12-3:8).

The Babylonian captivity was a line of demarcation. It marked the end of one era, and the beginning of another. Matthew uses it as a dividing line in the reckoning of Christ's genealogy. This lengthy chastisement was caused by Israel's disobedience, failing to give the land her sabbaths for four hundred and ninety years. Yet, the mighty God brought some good from it all.

The Intertestamental Period

Taken as a young man into the Babylonian captivity, Daniel's ministry extended until the approximate year of 535 B.C. – a period of about 71 years. The last book of our Old Testament Scriptures (Malachi) was written about 138 years later (around 397 B.C.). That was the last Old Testament book that was written, with Nehemiah being written a short time earlier, around 444 B.C. Following the writings of these two prophets, so far as the written word is concerned, the heavens were silent until the birth of John the Baptist was announced.

During a period of well over four hundred years no significant Jewish king or prophet is mentioned. No book of the Bible is written, and no outstanding prophecy was passed on to succeeding generations. While there were some uninspired Jewish books written during this period, there was no known prophet from God at that time, nor any inspired book from Him.

However, we are not left totally in the dark concerning this seemingly unproductive time. In order that the people of God not despair, a vision of this period was included in the Lord's revelations to Daniel. In my understanding, this was intended to bring hope to those living during such dry and desolate times. It confirmed that God was ruling, fulfilling His good pleasure, even though He did so without contemporary prophets and revelations. Men must learn to live in view of what God has made known in previous times, particularly if no immediate revelations are being granted in their time.

Daniel lived to see the Chaldean, or Babylonian empire, and the Medo-Persian as well. Additionally, however, he was given to see the next two kingdoms from a higher vantage point – the Grecian and Roman empires. Although he never lived to see their entrance into the political arena, he received more understanding concerning them than those who were contemporary with them.

This prophet was given a lofty view of the period of time between the last of the Jewish Prophets and the appearance of John the Baptist. In addition, revelations given to him illuminated periods after Christ, even up to the end of time. In all of them, the God of heaven was seen as controlling the affairs of men. Kings and kingdoms were raised up and put down through His power, and His alone.

THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL SUCH PERIODS

It should not surprise us that there have been several periods during which known prophets, and revelation in any form, were exceedingly sparse. A brief review of such periods is profitable.

- From Abel to Seth, whom God appointed as another seed in the place of Abel (Gen 4:25) – estimated to be over one hundred and thirty years (3901-3770 B.C.).
- From Seth to Enoch – a period estimated to be about five hundred years (3770 - 3274 B.C.). A single revelation is recorded to have been given to Enoch (Jude 1:14-15).
- From Enoch to Noah – a period of around four hundred and twenty-nine years (3274-2845 B.C.). Three revelations were given to Noah (Gen 6:13; 9:3-6; 9:8-17).
- From Noah to Abraham – a period of around eight hundred and ninety years (2845-1955 B.C.).
- From Abraham to Moses – a period of four hundred and twenty-seven years (1955-1528). During this period, several revelations were given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. From the death of Joseph to Moses' calling there as a period of at least eighty years of Divine silence (1528-1448 B.C.).
- From Malachi to John the Baptist – a period of approximately 424 years (597 B.C. A.D. 27).
However, even though revelation may have been sparse, or even non-existent, during these times, God was still the "Governor among the nations," ruling in all the earth (Psa 22:28). The fact that men may not hear from God has no bearing whatsoever upon whether or not He is ruling. This section of Daniel confirms this to be true.

SETTING THE STAGE

The development of this intertestamental period is setting the stage for the ninth chapter, in which the Messiah and His vicarious death will be introduced. It is designed to teach us that the world was not out of control while the people waited for the Messiah. Although ruthless governments arose, running roughshod over the whole world, yet God was in control, sovereignly governing the affairs of the world in a most minute and purposeful way.

Further, these governments all had some interface with the chosen people, and played a role in the development of the purpose of God.

- The Babylonian empire was used to the children of Judah.
- The Medo-Persian empire was used to begin the rebuilding of the Temple and the holy city.
- The Grecian empire was used to unite world in language, so that the general term for the Gentiles became "Greek" (Rom 1:16; Gal 3:18).
- The Roman empire also persecuted the Jews, exercising dominion over them until the day of Christ and beyond. It also provided a context in which the Gospel was made known.

What we have in this intertestamental period is God arranging the affairs of men, preparing for the coming of the Redeemer. Purposefully, He was working behind the scenes, setting the stage for the overthrow of sin and death.

All of the particulars are not revealed, and therefore we should not become unduly curious about them. However, enough is made known to assure our hearts that in the midst of political violence, the displacement of kingdoms, and the rise of despots, the will of the Lord was being done. Nothing was out of control. No kingdom extended itself a single second beyond the time appointed by God for their dominion. No king, however influential, created circumstances that put the God of heaven at a disadvantage.

Nothing transpiring upon the earth had an impact upon the purpose of God, causing it to be delayed, postponed, or temporarily put on hold. The wheels of Divine purpose rolled onward.

THE THIRD YEAR AND ANOTHER VISION

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

What occurred to Daniel, or what experiences he had, between the vision of chapter seven and this one, we do not know. A period of two years have passed since that first vision – a vision which left Daniel cogitating upon its significance (7:28). So far as the text is concerned, we left Daniel in deep thought two years ago. Now, another vision is vouchsafed to him. I say "vouchsafed" to him because this was a stewardship. The prophet is

not given a vision to entertain him, or to satisfy his personal curiosity. He will become a custodian of this vision. As such, he will be responsible for passing it on to us, that we might receive "perseverance" and "encouragement" through the Scriptures NASB (Rom 15:4).

THE THIRD YEAR

"In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me . . ." Belshazzar is mentioned eight times in the Scriptures – all by Daniel. The first six times related to the feast he threw the last day of his life. The last two were reference points for what occurred to Daniel. In fact, were it not for Daniel, Belshazzar would never have been mentioned at all. It was Daniel who made the feast of Belshazzar significant enough to be recorded in Scripture, for only a man of God could interpret the message of God given to Belshazzar.

Thus Belshazzar's reign, from the heavenly perspective is seen from two perspectives. First, it was a reference point the first two visions given to Daniel. Second, his was the reign that concluded the dominance of Babylon. The night he prepared the feast for a thousand of his nobles, he was told "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and the Persians" (5:28). That very night, "Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old" (5:31).

While Belshazzar was a ruler in the empire that governed the whole world, he was only a weightless mote on the scale of Divine purpose.

Historical Babylonian records indicate Belshazzar ruled as a coregent for about fifteen years, from 553 B.C. to 539 B.C. UNGER'S BIBLE DOCTIONARY That places this vision around 550, or twelve years before the demise of Babylon. This vision was, then, given in considerable advance of the fall of Babylon and the initial dominance of the Medo-Persian empire.

EVEN UNTO ME

" . . . even unto me Daniel . . ." In speaking in this manner, Daniel is distinguishing his own vision from the dreams given to Nebuchadnezzar (2:3; 4:5), and the writing on the wall delivered to Belshazzar (5:5). This is not a vision given to another and interpreted by Daniel. Rather, it is another vision given personally to him, as one who is "a man greatly beloved" by God (9:23; 10:11,19).

AFTER THAT

" . . . after that which appeared unto me at the first." Other versions read, "after the one that appeared to me the first time," NKJV "subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously," NASB "after the one that had already appeared to me," NIV and "after what I had seen in the beginning." DOUAY

The first vision appeared to Daniel in the first year of Belshazzar's reign, or around 553 B.C. That first vision was at least fifty three years after Daniel's deportation to Babylon, or when he was between sixty and seventy years of age. Even though Daniel "had understanding in all visions and dreams," his first vision did not come until the latter part of his life, fifty-three years after he became captive of Babylon.

There is certainly something to be seen here of the ways of God. They certainly are not the ways of man. Joseph received dreams from God when he was very young (Gen 37:5,9), and much later was given wisdom to interpret the dreams of others (Gen 40:5-16;41:7-32). Daniel first was the interpreter of the dreams of others, and was given his own visions later in life.

Such are the ways of God that men cannot see consistent patterns in them. For example, one time Jesus healed two blind men by touching their eyes (Matt 9:27-29). Another blind man was healed when the Lord "spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him" (Mark 8:22-23). Yet another blind was healed by Jesus merely speaking a word (Mark 10:46). Jesus healed another blind man by making clay out of spittle, anointing the man's eyes with the clay, and telling him to wash in the pool of Siloam (John 9:6-7). Those with a penchant for patterns will certainly find no procedure for healing blind people in Scripture – or, for that matter, for any other Divine working.

Only faith can behold the working of the Lord with profit. It is simply too challenging for man's unaided intellect. Now, in faithfulness to God, Daniel proceeds to give the particulars of his second vision. It was a private vision, but contained a universal message. It was not for him alone, but for us also. He is therefore faithful to declare it.

THE TIME AND THE PLACE

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

Remember, the time Daniel received this vision was during the reign of Babylon. The "head of gold" is still in place, with Belshazzar at the head of the province of Babylon. What Daniel now sees is the rise of another empire – the very one that will supplant the Babylonian, or Chaldean, empire.

Thus the Lord is showing Daniel more of the same thing revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in his first dream, and to Daniel in his first vision. Daniel will live to see this displacement, and therefore the Lord opens it further to him. He does this to assure the prophet's heart, for things that are known to the Lord are also controlled by Him.

Saints in succeeding generations will also derive great comfort from this revelation. First, it will enable them to properly assess the past, not leaving such assessments to the wise men of the world. Second, it confirms the world and time itself are moving toward the time appointed when the saints will possess the kingdom.

I SAW IN A VISION

"And I saw in a vision . . ." A "vision" is not something beheld with the flesh, or with human eyes. Rather, it is a revelation from God. It is something impressed upon the mind without the assistance of fleshly eyes. It is as though the individual was given to see beneath the surface of appearance with the eyes of understanding. The Lord told Aaron and Miriam that He would make Himself known to genuine prophets in a vision, and speak to them in dreams (Num 12:6).

There are several notable visions in Scripture. I relate these to confirm the nature of a vision.

- God appeared to Abram in a vision, confirming the covenant with him (Gen 15:1).
- Balaam saw a vision of the Almighty (Gen 24:4,16).
- The appearance of the Lord to young Samuel is called a "vision" (1 Sam 3:15).
- When God made known to David that He was going to make him a "house," the revelation was called a "vision" (2 Sam 7:17).
- The book of Isaiah is referred to as a "vision" (2 Chron 32:32; Isa 1:1).
- Ezekiel was given "visions of God" (Ezek 1:1; 11:24; 43:4).
- Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great statue was revealed to Daniel in a "vision" (Dan 2:19).
- The apostle Paul was given "visions" (2 Cor 12:1).
- When the angel of the Lord appeared to Zachariah, he did so in a "vision" (Lk 1:22).
- The women who saw angels at the tomb of Jesus are said to have seen "a vision of angels" (Lk 24:23).
- When calling Ananias to further instruct Saul of Tarsus. He did so through a "vision" (Acts 9:10).
- When the Lord appeared to both Cornelius and Peter. He did so through "visions" (Acts 10:3,17;11:5).
- When the Lord called Paul and company into Macedonia. He did so through a "vision" (Acts 16:9).
- The Lord instructed Paul to stay on in Corinth, doing so through a "vision" (Acts 18:9).
- Paul refers to his calling on the road to Damascus as a "heavenly vision" (Acts 26:19).
- Aspects of the revelation given to John on the Isle of Patmos were called a "vision" (Rev 9:17).

A vision, therefore, is not something nebulous and strange. Neither, indeed, is it something addressed to the fleshly senses. It is one of the means the Lord uses to communicate with men, showing them His will and purpose in a sort of animated form.

I WAS AT SHUSHAN

" . . . and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam . . . "

This is the first mention of "Shushan" in the book of Daniel. This was the place of rule for the Persians. It is where Nehemiah was later employed (Neh 1:1), and where Esther resided during the reign of the Persians (Esth 1:2;9:12).

Shushan was over two hundred miles from Babylon. It is not likely that Daniel, a captive in Babylon, was given leave to travel there. It was in his vision that he was transported to Shushan, even as Ezekiel was transported in a vision to Jerusalem (Ezek 8:3). Daniel was lifted above himself and the world in this vision, transported by the Spirit to the citadel of Persia, to which this vision pertained.

In his vision, Daniel is transported to the palace, "which is in the province of Elam." There is no evidence that this palace had been built at the time of this vision. Thus, Daniel is transported into the future, and given to see surroundings that were not yet actually established. He will see the vision from within the empire to which it pertained. I am sure this is a proper view of the vision, for after it had been given to him, Daniel said he "rose up, and did the king's business" (v.27). The king had to be Belshazzar, during whose reign the vision occurred. It is doubtful such business could be conducted from Shushan.

BY THE RIVER ULAI

" . . . and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai." This river flowed by the city of Shushan, eventually merging with the Tigris and the Euphrates. Again, Daniel was not bodily by this river, but was transported there in the vision. The Lord took him in spirit to the place from which the next power would arise.

You see with what precision the vision is given, and how precisely the prophet remembers it. It is the nature of the Holy Spirit to sharpen our powers of discernment, enabling particulars to be both seen and recalled.

There is a tendency among some to attribute vague occurrences and experiences of unconsciousness to the Holy Spirit, or the working of the Lord. However, this is not the experience of Daniel.

A RAM WITH TWO HORNS

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

Daniel's first revelation concerning the kingdoms of the world was given as the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:19,30). Around fifty-four years later (604-550 B.C.), Daniel was given his own vision concerning these kingdoms, in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar (7:1). Now, two years after the initial revelation, God unveils more of the same kingdoms, in the third year of Belshazzar's reign.

It should be apparent to us that this is a matter of great gravity! The Lord is showing Daniel a period of time during which no known prophet existed, and no inspired writing was recorded. The absence of prophets and fresh Scripture, however, did not mean the absence of Divine rule. Still, without the immediate and apparent involvement of the Lord, wickedness and ruthlessness surfaced in unprecedented measure. It is a principle in Scripture that the apparent, or manifested, presence of the Lord tends to subdue the outbreak of iniquity. Such revelations contribute to greater sobriety than is normal among the sons of men. Thus, upon witnessing the working of the Lord, both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius issued global edicts concerning the honor of the God of heaven (4:1-13; 6:25-27). The same was true when the Lord revealed His glory at Sinai (Ex 19:9). It was only after the glory faded, that Israel indulged themselves in sin (Ex 32:1).

Thus, we will behold all manner of cruelty and human depravity during the time of Divine silence, from Malachi's writing to John the Baptist. Even then, however, iniquity will not be allowed to interfere with the fulfillment of God's purpose. The appointed forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist, will still appear on schedule. The promised Messiah will still come into the world at the appointed time. The day of Pentecost will not be delayed, but will occur as God determined.

I LIFTED UP MINE EYES

"Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw . . ." Other versions read, "I lifted my gaze and looked," NASB "I looked up," NIV "I raised my eyes and say," RSV and "lifting up my eyes, I saw." BBE

This is the posture of learning: having the eyes "lifted up." When Abraham lifted up his eyes, he saw the place God had designed for the offering of Isaac (Gen 22:4). When he was in the act of offering Isaac, he beheld the substitute only when his eyes were "lifted up" (Gen 22:13). David saw an angel of the Lord when he "lifted up his eyes" (1 Chron 21:16). When Ezekiel was shown "visions of God," he was told to "lift up" his eyes (Ezek 8:5). Zechariah beheld marvelous things from God when he "lifted up" his eyes (Zech 2:1). On the mount of transfiguration, when Peter, James, and John "lifted up their eyes," they "saw Jesus only" (Matt 17:8). Twice the sweet Psalmist of Israel said, "I will lift up mine eyes" (Psa 121:1; 123:1).

In this sense, the lifting of the eyes is an expression of understanding. The person comprehends there is something to be known. It also reflects an attitude of expectancy. This is not a haphazard lifting of the head, but an action of anticipation. It is a movement of faith, and an expression of hope. The lifting of the eyes, as used in this text, is the prelude to understanding.

An Application

The uplifted eyes are to be preferred to heads that hang down "to the ground" (Lam 2:10). Many walk through life with their heads toward the ground like Cleopas and his friend (Lk 24:17). They seem to have no awareness of the good things that can be theirs if they will only lift up their eyes. They do not expect much from God, and therefore do not look up. The posture of faith, on the other hand, moves one to look up expectantly.

A RAM WITH TWO HORNS

" . . . and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high . . ." Other versions read, "a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now he two horns were long," NASB "a ram with two long horns standing beside the river," NLT

A "ram" is a male sheep, especially noted for its strength. The ram itself denotes the singularity of the kingdom . The two horns confirm it was a combination of two powers, or kingdoms – a single empire with two parts. Here the Lord approaches the kingdoms of the world in an entirely different way.

Our First Exposure

Our first exposure to the four great kingdoms of the world depicted them as a single statue comprised of differing metals. In that image, the value and glory of the kingdoms were emphasized. Babylon was a head of gold. The Medo-Persians were a breast and arms of silver. The Grecian kingdom was a belly and thighs of brass. The Roman empire was legs of iron, and feet of a mixture of iron and clay. There was a noticeable decline in their value.

In this vision, there was a sense in which all of the kingdoms stood and fell together. They all functioned according to worldly principles. They all tended to deteriorate. They all were temporary. They all were felled by the same opposing power, which was the kingdom of God, which means they all operated in contradiction of that heavenly kingdom.

In this first representation, the kingdoms of the world were brought to an end by means of God's kingdom. It began as a small stone, finally becoming a mountain that filled the whole earth. Thus we started with earthly kingdoms, and ended with the Kingdom of God being the only kingdom.

Our Second Exposure

Our second exposure to the same four kingdoms viewed them according to their nature. They all surfaced from the sea of agitated humanity. They were all beastly – i.e., crude in power as compared with the power of the God of heaven. In this vision, the kingdoms were not viewed as a whole, but as individual kingdoms with differing natures. Babylon was like a lordly lion with the wings of an eagle, permitting it to move swiftly and with majesty. The Medo-Persians were like a vicious bear, tearing out the ribs of its opponents. But one side of the bear was more powerful than the other, and it raised up on that side. The Grecian empire was likened to a swift leopard that also moved swiftly, craftily devouring its prey. It had four heads, or came to be ruled by four different entities. The Roman empire was a beast unlike any of the others. It had iron teeth, and nails of brass, eating up its victims and stamping the residue that fell to the ground into pieces. It had ten divisions, from which a boastful and unparalleled ruler rose. That ruler made war with the saints.

In this vision, God again brings an end to the kingdoms of the world. However, there are some added features. First, we are introduced to the Messiah, depicted as "one like unto the Son of man." The kingdom is given to Him as He returns to heaven in a cloud and stands before the "Ancient of days," who is the God of heaven. Second, the kingdom is also given to the saints of the most high God, and the time comes when they possess it in all of its glory and dominion. Thus we again started with earthly kingdoms, and ended with the Kingdom of God being the only kingdom. This time the kingdom is seen as being governed by the Son of man, and eventually given to the saints, or people, of the most High God.

Our Third Exposure

Now we zero in on just two of the kingdoms. The first kingdom, Babylon, is ignored altogether. This vision is given during the reign of Belshazzar, who would be the last king of Babylon. Thus, transported to the kingdom of Persia itself, Daniel will be shown the kingdom that will displace Babylon, and how it will itself be cast down. The first two visions started with Babylon. This one starts with the Medo-Persia empire.

Once again, the duality of this kingdom is accented. First we saw it as a breast with two arms of silver. Then we saw it as a bear, raised up on one side. Now we see it as a ram with two significant horns. Later the identity of these horns is revealed. "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia" (Dan 8:20).

ONE WAS HIGHER, AND CAME UP LAST

" . . . but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last." The first vision of these kingdoms did not make known the superiority of one of the parts of this kingdom. The second vision revealed that one part would be more dominant, as the bear lifted itself one side. Now a special point is made of one part of the kingdom coming into dominance. "One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later" (Dan 8:3). That is, the empire started out as seemingly co-equal kingdoms, although the Medes were prominent at the first: "the Medes and Persians" (5:28; 6:8,12,15). However, one of these kingdoms would rise to prominence – even over the other one.

Persian Prominence

When Babylon was displaced, it was by "the Medes." Speaking of the overthrow of Babylon Isaiah said, "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them . . . And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isa 13:17-19). Jeremiah declared the same thing, "Make bright the arrows: gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it: because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple" (Jer 51:11,28). Yet, when the Lord actually brought the judgment, He revealed to Belshazzar that his kingdom was given to "the Medes and the Persians" (Dan 5:28). When Belshazzar was killed, "Darius the Mede took the kingdom" (5:31).

However, as time progressed, the horn of Persia outgrew the horn of the Medes, and it became the most prominent kingdom. That shift of power is revealed to Daniel in this vision – several years before it actually occurred, and even before Babylon was overthrown. While it is declared elsewhere, Daniel himself emphasizes this shift of power in accounting for his long influence. "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (Dan 6:28). He marked the duration of his reign "even unto the first year of king Cyrus" (Dan 1:21). Also, he details a vision he received "in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia" (10:1).

Persia became the prominent part of the kingdom with the rapid rise of Cyrus about the time the captives of Judah began to return to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity. This appears to have occurred about two years after the fall of Babylon, or around 536 B.C. At that point, the bear lifted itself up on one side, and one of the horns on the ram grew longer and reached higher than the other. The Medo-Persian empire spread to its widest extremities during the reign of "Cyrus the Persian."

The Reason for the Prominence

Nebuchadnezzar played a role in Divine purpose by being the means God used to chasten Israel. Darius played a role in that purpose by bringing down Babylon, according to the word of the Lord. Cyrus also plays a vital role in the purpose of God. That role is what vaulted Persia into prominence.

Isaiah prophesied that God would rebuild Jerusalem through Cyrus, whom God called "My shepherd." Thus it is written, "That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers: that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited: and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: That saith of Cyrus, He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built: and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isa 44:28).

God communicated a word to Cyrus, although we do not know precisely how. It appears as though it came through Isaiah. Here is that word. "Thus saith the LORD to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the bands of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates: and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel." For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me. I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me. That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside Me. I am the LORD, and there is none else" (Isa 45:1-6).

Ezra records the edict issued by Cyrus, in which he confessed the call of God upon him. It is a remarkable record, especially when you consider this man was the king of Persia. "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth: and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:1-4).

The word spoken by Jeremiah related to the seventy year Babylonian captivity, and is recorded in Jeremiah 25:12-14 and 29:10. In particular, Jeremiah spoke of the rebuilding of Jerusalem in Jeremiah 33:7-13.

Thus, it is revealed, Cyrus was raised up to do the following.

- To subdue nations (Isa 45:1).
- For the sake of His people Israel (Isa 45:4).
- That men everywhere might know God is God, and none else (Isa 45:6).
- To fulfill the word of Jeremiah (Ezra 1:1).
- To gather the children of Judah together to build the house of the Lord (Ezra 1:3).
- To build God's house in Jerusalem of Judah (Ezra 1:2).
- To gather an offering for the construction of that house, which was the Temple (Ezra 1:4).
- To contribute to the project from his own treasury (Ezra 3:7).
- To return the vessels of the Temple that were taken by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezra 5:13-14).
- To ensure that the foundations of God's house were laid properly (Ezra 6:3-4).

In order for this to be accomplished expeditiously and to the glory of God, great power was given to Cyrus. This power caused the Persian part of the empire to become dominant. Thus God held his right hand, subdued nations before him, stripped kings of their armor making them vulnerable to him, and opened protective gates before him (Isa 45:1). God went before Cyrus, making crooked places straight, breaking hindering gates of brass, and cutting through bars of iron (Isa 45:2). He gave him treasures that were hidden in darkness, and riches stored in secret places (Isa 45:3). Of Cyrus the Persian God said, "I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts" (Isa 45:13). He was given "all the kingdoms of the earth" in order that he might build the house of the Lord (Ezra 1:2).

That is why one of the rams horns grew larger than the other. That is why Persia became dominant.

Now Daniel is shown the demise of that empire after the purpose for which it was elevated had been accomplished.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

If so much can be said about Babylon, the Medes and Persians, the Grecians, and the Romans, what can be said of the Kingdom of God? If such a lengthy revelation was given of these temporary empires, all of which would give way to the kingdom of God, what can be said of the kingdom that crushed them all – the one set up by the God of heaven?

When Jesus came preaching, He proclaimed, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17). When Jesus confronted multitudes that wanted to stay with him, He said, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also" (Lk 4:43). When He sent out the twelve, He commissioned them, "preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 10:7). When he told a certain young man to follow him, and the man requested permission to go and bury his father, Jesus replied, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:60).

Philip preached "the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 8:12). Paul told the Ephesian elders he had gone among them "preaching the kingdom of God" (Acts 20:25). When he was captive in Rome, and given his own house and appointed a time to speak to the people, he was found "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 28:31).

The Epistles are filled with direct and indirect references to "the kingdom of God." All of them are most significant. Some of them include the following.

- "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).
- "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power" (1 Cor 4:20).
- "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col 1:13).
- "Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer" (2 Thess 1:5).
- "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2:5).
- "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:11).

If it were not for this kingdom, we would read nothing about these other kingdoms in Scripture. They were only pawns on the Divine trestle board, used by Him in the establishment of His own everlasting kingdom among men.

AN OBSERVATION

Prior to the coming of Christ Jesus, considerable was said of earthly kingdoms. Nearly all of these references are in relation to the Israelites, the chosen people of God. They include Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Medes and Persians, and others. Several nations were also mentioned in regards to their gods: i.e., "the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines" (Judges 10:5).

With the advent of Jesus and the "day of salvation," the references to nations changed. In the book of Acts, kingdoms are mentioned in regards to the hearing of the Gospel. On the day of Pentecost, for example, we read of "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome . . . Cretes and Arabians" (Acts 2:9-11). There is reference of preaching the Gospel in "Spain," and "Rome" as well (Rom 15:24; Acts 23:11).

However, the thrust is now upon spiritual powers, not earthly governments. Believers are not said to contend with nations as Israel did, but with "principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12).

Prior to this glorious time of Divine acceptance, God was maneuvering the nations in order to prepare for the coming of His Son. Now that the Son has come, our attention is turned to His kingdom, which is "over all" (Eph 1:22). Even though great political kingdoms have arisen since Jesus, the emphasis of revelation is not placed upon them. Whatever success they enjoy, it is only temporal, and they will all yield to the Kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

While care must be taken not to draw rigid theological lines on this matter, we must be equally careful to avoid a theology that places the accent upon any worldly kingdom – even one headed up by Jesus! Such an emphasis is not in harmony with the salvation of our God.

AGGRESSIVE AND POWERFUL

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

We now come to the conquests of the Medo-Persians, with the accent upon the Persians, and the reign of Cyrus in particular. Both Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus played significant roles in the fulfilling of the will of the Lord: Nebuchadnezzar in the chastening of Israel, and Cyrus in their recovery from the chastening. Further, both are mentioned by name. Nebuchadnezzar is mentioned ninety times in Scripture, and Cyrus twenty-three. Thus, the text before us is in perfect harmony with the previous revelations of this kingdom in the Chronicles, Ezra, and Isaiah. Divine precision is in the text.

THE PUSHING RAM

"I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward . . ."

The ram is pictured as standing in the East, facing the West, with the North and South on his right and left. This particular figure accents the expansion of the Medo-Persian empire.

In the West the Medo-Persian empire embraced Babylonia, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Asia Minor. In the North it embraced Colchis, Armenia, Iberia, and the regions around the Caspian Sea. In the South it included Palestine, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Lybia. Lengerke It extended itself further than Babylon, and was even more global than the head of gold, or the lion with the wings of an eagle.

Notice, the ram is not said to have pushed toward the East. The conquests of the Medo-Persians did not extend into the East. Rather, speaking of Cyrus the Persian, Isaiah wrote that he would come from the East. " Who raised up the righteous man from the east , called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings? he gave them as the dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow" (Isa 41:2). That "righteous man" is later referred to as "Cyrus," whom God calls "My shepherd" (Isa 44:28). He is also called the Lord's "anointed" (Isa 45:1). Later in Isaiah, the Lord refers to Cyrus as "a ravenous bird" that would be called "from the East" (Isa 46:11).

It is my understanding that the ram pushing toward the three directions West, North, and South, agree with the previous figure of a bear with THREE ribs in his mouth (7:5), although is not intended to be the exclusive fulfillment of that figure. One man has said "The principle theater of their wars was against the SCYTHIANS, northward; against the GREEKS, westward; and against the EGYPTIANS, southward." CALMET My only point in providing this detail is to confirm the precision of the prophecy, and how it perfectly conforms with Scripture primarily, and history secondarily. For those who wish to take the time to pursue a more thorough knowledge of these things, it will become apparent that God is a God of precision. His revelations are noted for their exactness.

Once again, I want to emphasize that the successful thrust of the Persians was not owing to their military superiority. Rather, this was the result of Divine activity that had particular regard to the recovery of Judah from the Babylonian captivity. God is the one who ultimately gave the ram its power.

NO BEASTS COULD STAND BEFORE HIM

" . . . so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand . . ." Other versions read, "so that no animal could withstand him," NKJV "no other beasts could stand before him," NASB and "all beasts were powerless to withstand it." NRSV

Notice how all other kingdoms are referred to as "beasts." That is because, depending upon the flesh, they are brutish and crude, as compared to the God of heaven and the wise fulfillment of His purposes.

This expression is another way of affirming what Cyrus himself confessed, "All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given unto me" (2 Chron 36:23). It affirms the fulfillment of what God said to Cyrus, "Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates: and the gates shall not be shut: I will go before thee , and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron" (Isa 45:1-2).

Thus the Scriptures account in a most precise manner the success of the pushing ram – the Medo-Persian empire, particularly under the leadership of Cyrus the Persian. As with Nebuchadnezzar, he received his power for God, and he received it to fulfill the purpose of God.

HE DID ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, AND BECAME GREAT

" . . . but he did according to his will, and became great." Other versions read, "he did as he pleased and magnified himself," NASB "it did as it pleased, and became strong," NRSV "but he did whatever his pleasure was and made himself great," BBE and "it hath done according to its pleasure, and hath exerted itself."

This is the inspired way of saying nothing could hinder the spread of the Medo-Persian empire, especially under the leadership of "Cyrus the Persian." This is language that denotes rapid spread, apparent success, and unhindered progress. Keep in mind, there is no such power except it come from God.

Not Strange Language

This kind of language is not strange to us: i.e., an earthly monarch doing whatever he desires. The same thing was also said of Nebuchadnezzar, and in language that is most arresting, "And for the majesty that He [God] gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down" (Dan 5:19).

Later in Daniel, he will speak of an opponent of the people of God, who will also "do according to his will" (11:3,36).

Earlier in Daniel, this very thing was said of the God of heaven Himself: "He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan 4:35).

The Psalmist wrote, "But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased " (Psa 115:3). In speaking of the efficacy of prayer, John wrote, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will , He heareth us" (1 John 5:14).

How is it that this Divine quality – doing whatever one desires – is attributed to heathen rulers like Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus? It is because God gave them their power. This is precisely what is meant by Paul's comments about earthly government, "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God" NASB (Rom 13:1). This is why God punished the nations that did not subject themselves to Nebuchadnezzar, including Judah, whom God was chastening through him. "Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?" (Jer 27:13).

This should not surprise us, or cause our hearts to quake in fear of men. It has already been said of God, "He removeth kings, and setteth up kings" (Dan 2:21), and "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Dan 4:17).

It is not possible that Cyrus could have been so successful if God did not allow it for His own purposes. Such power cannot be taken to men independently of the dispensation of God. In fact, it is God who CAUSED Cyrus to flourish, and the Medo-Persian empire to spread. That spread was also under His strict control, and would last no longer than the time God's own determined purpose was being served.

Comment

The Saints

If such can be said of a heathen king whom God used, what can be said of those who are in Christ Jesus, toward whom exceeding great power has been directed. Solemnly, and with great grace, the saints are informed of the focus of Divine power upon them. " . . . that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power " (Eph 1:18-19). And again, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us " (Eph 3:20).

The Lord Jesus Christ

On a much larger scale, what can be said of the exalted Christ to whom "all power in heaven and earth" has been given (Matt 28:18). What of the reign of King Jesus, of whom it is said, "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him " (1 Pet 3:22). What of Him who has been exalted "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph 1:21).

Will not Jesus do according to His will? Will not His Kingdom spread, putting down all other powers, and subduing all opponents? Is it not written that He will "put down all rule and all authority and all power" (1 Cor 15:24)?

If Nebuchadnezzar could build Babylon, and Cyrus could build Persia, what may be said of Christ's words, "I will build my church" (Matt 16:18). Rest assured, more will not be said of kings Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus than of the King of kings and Lord of lords! God gave some power to them. He gave "all power" to Jesus!

It is true that at this present time, according to appearance, it does not look as though Jesus is exalted, or that He has all power in heaven and earth. But he does! There are some powers He has not yet openly confronted, but they still belong to Him and are under His control. When He deals with them, they will fall.

Like Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, He is allowing them to run their course until He is finished with them. But the time is coming when they will all lose their power, just as surely as Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus lost theirs! That is a lesson we must glean from this passage.

HE TOUCHED NOT THE GROUND, AND HAD A NOTABLE HORN

" 5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes." The vision now expands, and the ram is no longer its center. Daniel has seen a time and a season given to the ram. Now he will see a time and a season given to another ruler. God will remove one king and set up another. He will cast down one empire, and raise up another. Keep in mind, we are beholding the working of God during a period of time in which there was no known prophet, and during which no Scripture was written. Yet, the Lord is confirming that He is imminent in the affairs of men, whether they are aware of it or not.

WHILE I WAS CONSIDERING

"And as I was considering . . ." Once again we see how the things of God are unfolded as the attentiveness and consideration of men are drawn into the matter.

To "consider" is to look well into, consider diligently, and be attentive. The Lord was showing something to Daniel, and the prophet devoted himself heartily to the revelation, refusing to be distracted from it. "Considering" is giving "attendance" or attention to something (1 Tim 4:13). It is wrapping our mind around a specific thing, and refusing to be drawn away from it.

Many a professing believer comes short of obtaining an understanding of the things of God simply because they do not give themselves to a consideration of them. They attempt to move about upon the truth as a spider walks upon the water. They never really give themselves to the understanding of holy things. They are content to deal only with surface matters. Studiously they avoid anything pertaining to life and godliness that challenge the mind, or require extended thought and deliberation. This approach to the truth of God is quite prominent in the modern church, and those caught up in it have, by that very involvement, forfeited perceptions and understanding that belong to them by virtue of their union with Christ.

HE CAME FROM THE WEST

" . . . behold, an he goat came from the West on the face of the whole earth . . ." Other versions read, "suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth," NKJV "a male goat was coming from the West over the surface of the whole earth," NASB and "a he-goat from the west, encroaching over the entire surface of the world." NJB

Later this "he-goat" is referred to as a "rough," or "shaggy goat." It is then identified as "the king of Grecia." That this is the same goat mentioned in this text is clear from the following: "And the rough goat is the king of Grecia." (Dan 8:21a). This is, then, the Grecian kingdom, and the first king of that kingdom that would displace the Medo-Persian empire.

It is not by coincidence that historical findings confirm the Grecian empire used a one-horned goat as its symbol. A replica of Grecian art is provided in confirmation of this.

The Greek empire was to the West of the Persian empire, and thus the he-goat is said to come "from the West."

HE TOUCHED NOT THE GROUND

" . . . and touched not the ground . . ." Other versions read, "without touching the ground," NKJV and "without touching the earth," BBE

The idea is that this goat rapidly moved across the face of the earth without touching the ground – flying, as it were, with swiftness and great power. Thus the NIV reads, "crossing the whole earth without touching the ground." The picture is one of rapid movement and speedy conquests. This depiction perfectly corresponds with earlier portrayal of Greece as a swift leopard with four wings (Dan 7:6). With unparalleled swiftness and effectiveness the ram, indentified as Grecia, moved across the globe, subjugating other kingdoms to itself. It could not be hindered, and none could stand before it.

A NOTABLE HORN BETWEEN HIS EYES

" . . . and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes." Other versions read, "had a conspicuous horn between his eyes," NASB "a prominent horn," NIV "a great horn," BBE "majestic horn," NJB and "one very large horn." NLT

Later, this horn is specifically identified. " . . . and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king" (S21b).

The "first king" of mention is Alexander the Great , who ran roughshod over Persia, occupying an even greater dominion than that of the unprecedented Medo-Persian empire. Alexander, who himself claimed to be the "son of Jupiter-Ammon," included the ram's horn as part of a medallion he made of himself.

The swiftness with which Alexander swept across the world is still the object of military inquiry. Within seven years, he conquered the entire world, completing the feat before was thirty-three years of age. He was king of Macedonia from 336-323 B.C.

AN OBSERVATION

Something of the Divine manner is seen in this revelation. The fate of all four of the kingdoms of reference (Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman) was revealed to Nebuchadnezzar. The demise of the Babylonian kingdom was revealed to Belshazzar. Some limited revelation of the rise of the Greek empire was revealed to Darius during the reign of the Medes and the Persians (Dan 11). However, no revelation was given to the Greeks or the Romans. Everything pertaining to their rise and fall was revealed to Daniel, but nothing to Alexander or any succeeding rulers. That was because there was no known prophet in their days. God, we are told, "will do nothing, but He revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). There were no prophets during the period in which these kingdoms rose to prominence. Therefore, God revealed their destiny to a prophet living prior to their inception.

It ought to be noted that, according to Amos' statement (3:7), the very fact that God revealed the destiny of these empires confirms that He was the One doing these things. God reveals what He is doing, not merely what will occur in time. He is the One who is governing the world.

There is something else to be noted here concerning life in this world. There is no guarantee of prolonged safety to those remaining "in the body." Those who boast of Divine protection in the flesh are not thinking clearly.

- The hand of the Lord is often used for chastening as well as for protection – and His people are sometimes caught in the maelstrom of such judgments. Daniel himself is a case in point, personally affected by the judgment of the Babylonian captivity.
- There are also famines and pestilence that come upon the earth that effect the people of God. Famines during the time of Abraham (Gen 12:10), Isaac (Gen 26:1), Jacob (Gen 42:1-2), David (2 Sam 21:1), and Elijah (1 Kgs 17:4-6) are cases in point.
- Jesus spoke of a tribulation that would be "shortened" "for the elect's sake," who obviously were affected by it (Matt 24:22).
- Jesus told faithful people to pray the destruction of Jerusalem, and their consequent "flight," would not come in the winter, or on the Sabbath day (Matt 24:20).
- The Lord also said, "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!" (Mat 24:19).

Some believers are taught that they will be delivered from all calamity. Others are taught they will assuredly be delivered from the more severe hardships of life. Do not imagine that these heretical teachings are true, for they are not. The list of saints who endured hardship because of the sins of others is massive to mention. Such saints range from Joshua and Caleb, to Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It is inexcusable that such things should be unknown by those in Christ Jesus.

The people of God have not been guaranteed exemption from the social and political agitations, or the natural calamities, of this world. An honest heart will confirm this to be true. However, ultimately, they will be delivered from them all, and will possess the kingdom.

THE HE GOAT CONFRONTS THE RAM

" 6 And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand."

Daniel has seen the Medo-Persian empire pushing the borders of its kingdom in an unprecedented way. It may have seemed as though it was invincible, particularly since it devastated mighty Babylon. However, as it is written, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword." On the other hand, the saints, who will eventually receive te kingdom in its fulness, have only to wait to receive it. They do not push like the ram to obtain it. Therefore the Revelation adds to the statement just quoted, "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" (Rev 13:10).

Now the ram will face one greater than it – the he-goat coming from the West. Thus God is showing the limited power of earthly kingdoms. They are not everlasting, and therefore always yield to another greater than themselves.

ATTACKS THE RAM WITH FURY

The Grecian kingdom does not remain in the West, but asserts itself. It now focuses upon the powerful Medo-Persian empire. This is the kingdom of which it had been said, "no beasts" could stand before it, none could deliver out of its hand, and it did according to its will, and it became great (verse 4). Yet, all of this will now come to an abrupt end.

It is no wonder we are told, "It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes" (Psa 118:8-9). Again it is written, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psa 146:3-4). One day the Persians could boast they were the greatest power upon earth. The next day they would be dashed in pieces by a superior power!

We must learn from this event not to boast about any government on earth as though it was superior – the greatest of all, and never to be overcome. The Ruler of all is God, who has given the entirety of His kingdom to the Son. Ultimately, the Son will give it to the saints, and they will possess the kingdom as "joint heirs" with Christ (Rom 8:17), sitting with Him in His throne (Rev 3:21). The knowledge of this should lead us to the unwavering understanding that no kingdom of men will stand forever. All the kingdoms of the world are temporary and vulnerable.

Ran in the Fury of His Power

"And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power."

The he-goat, depicting the Grecian empire in general, and Alexander the Great in particular, engages in an initiative against the ram, depicting the Medo-Persian empire, with the Persians in dominance. Incidentally, the very first thing that is said of Alexander the Great in Britannica Encyclopedia is this, "He overthrew the Persian Empire." BRITANNICA 2002

Our text says he came toward them "in the fury of his power." Other versions read, "rushed at him in his mighty wrath," NASB "charged at him in great rage," NIV "ran at it with savage force," NRSV and "rushing at him in the heat of his power." BBE

Came Close to the Ram

"And I saw him come close unto the ram . . ." That is, the he-goat did not take the battle into a theater far removed from the Persian empire. He did not confront the ram in a valley removed from the heart of the empire, like the Philistines engaged Israel in the valley. Just as the Medes and the Persians invaded Babylon, the citadel of the Chaldean empire, so they were defeated in their own territory and at the peak of its strength .

Historically, this was a bold move. Under the reign of king Darius (not the "Darius" of Daniel) had conquered nearly the whole East. Darius had fortified the Persian empire with many different strong cities. These cities were spaced strategically so that every aspect of the empire was protected. It was generally thought that these cities were impregnable. For this reason, according to man's thinking, it was foolish for the ram to "come close to the ram," for it was surrounded by seemingly impregnable cities and a vast arm of men. However, God was in this matter. He was going to take the kingdom from the Medes and Persians and give it to the Greeks.

An additional consideration that highlights the significance of the triumph of Greece is seen in the distance between Persia and Greece. It was a great distance, with many significant rivers and mountain ranges between the two. The distance between Macedonia (where Alexander started) and Persia was approximately 1,200 miles, as the crow flies. Yet Alexander overcame all these natural obstacles, and rushed against the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. Getting to Persia was a feat of itself, to say nothing of conquering it.

Moved with Choler

" . . . and he was moved with choler against him . . ." Other versions read, "moved with rage," NKJV "he was enraged at him," NASB "attack the ram furiously," NIV "moved with anger," ASV "Moved with wrath," BBE "furiously enraged against," Septuagint and "becometh embittered against it." YLT

The English word "choler" means, "the quality or state of being bilious (ill-natured disposition), a ready disposition to irritation." The Hebrew word used here included the idea of being sorely vexed, grieved, or provoked. It includes the idea of a bitterness – rage that causes strength to increase and determination to rise to a peak. Such rage and strength not only make the person aggressive, but shrewdly and confidently so.

The he-goat, therefore, was irritated with the ram, and provoked by his very appearance to wrath and fierce and aggressive anger. The he-goat does not seethe within, but comes at the ram in a determination to destroy it. Standing on the opposite side of the river, the he-goat leaps, as it were, across it in an aggressive attack of the ram.

Smote the Ram

"... and smote the ram ..." Other versions read, "attacked the ram," NKJV and "struck the ram." NASB

The idea is that of rushing headlong into the ram, butting it with his horns in a head-to-head confrontation. Remember, this is the empire that itself had pushed its borders wider than mighty Babylon, doing so with force. Prior to this confrontation, no "beast," or kingdom, was able to stand before it. However, as with Belshazzar, its days had been numbered, it had been weighted in the balances, and found wanting.

Broke His Two Horns

"... and brake his two horns ..." Other versions show how the horns were broken by the fierce of the blow with which the he-goat struck the ram. "He struck the ram and shattered his horns," NASB "striking the ram and shattering his two horns," NIV and "struck it, breaking off both its horns." NLT

Both branches of the government were broken – the "Medes and the Persians." In other words, the empire was thoroughly broken, or decimated. In breaking the two horns, the Medo-Persian empire was brought to an end. It was, at that time, merged with the kingdom over which Alexander presided.

The Ram had No Power

"... and there was no power in the ram to stand before him ..." The language means that the victory was easy for Alexander, or with little effort. It is as though he rolled over this mighty empire with little or no resistance. By comparison, Nebuchadnezzar required several campaigns before he finally decimated Jerusalem. Also, consider that it took mighty Rome approximately six years to conquer diminutive Jerusalem, which it finally destroyed in 70 AD.

In the case of Alexander's conquest of Persia, however, there were both swiftness and ease.

Alexander's core army was exceedingly small, by way of comparison with the Persian forces. Yet, to this very day, the swiftness and expertise with which they fought is studied by military strategists. The following statement makes this known.

"With a good cavalry force Alexander could expect to defeat any Persian army. In spring 334 he crossed the Dardanelles, leaving Antipater, who had already faithfully served his father, as his deputy in Europe with over 13,000 men; he himself commanded about 30,000 foot and over 5,000 cavalry ... of whom nearly 14,000 were Macedonians and about 7,000 allies sent by the Greek League. This army was to prove remarkable for its balanced combination of arms. Much work fell on the lightarmed Cretan and Macedonian archers, Thracians, and the Aegadian javelin men. But in pitched battle the striking force was the cavalry, and the core of the army, should the issue still remain undecided after the cavalry charge, was the infantry phalanx, 9,000 strong, armed with 13-foot spears and shields, and the 3,000 men of the royal battalions, the hypaspists." BRITANNICA 2002

Confirming the above is general knowledge, Matthew Henry also says of Alexander's conquest of the Persian empire, "Alexander with his victorious army attacked the kingdom of Persia, an army consisting of no more than 30,000 footmen and 5000 horsemen."

The Ram Cast to the Ground and Mercilessly Stamped

"... but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him; and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand."

This is a depiction of the utter devastation and overthrow of the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. This was done during the prominence of the Persians, as pictured in one of the ram's horns being above the other, and the bear lifting itself on one side.

The judgment of the Medo-Persian empire, when Persian was dominant, fulfills a principle uttered by Isaiah. This word was spoken against the Assyrians, yet the principle applies to all ruthless empires who have expanded their borders by force. "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee" (Isa 33:1).

"It was with the greatest violence that Alexander pushed on his war against Darius, who, though he brought vast numbers into the field, yet, for want of skill, was an unequal match for him, so that Alexander was too hard for him whenever he engaged him, smote him, cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him, which three expressions, some think, refer to the three famous victories that Alexander obtained over Darius, at Granicus, at Issus, and at Arbela, by which he was at length totally routed, having, in the last battle, had 600,000 men killed," so that Alexander became absolute master of all the Persian empire, broke his two horns, the kingdoms of Media and Persia. The ram that had destroyed all before him (v. 4) now is himself destroyed. Darius has no power to stand before Alexander, nor has he any friends or allies to help to deliver him out of his hand." MATTHEW HENRY

In order to further confirm the magnitude of the triumph of the he-goat, I include this most excellent synopsis of John Gill, Bible expositor and preacher from the 1700's.

"... the Persians were smitten and routed by the Grecians: first at the river Granicus, where Alexander with thirty thousand foot, and five thousand horse, met the Persians, though more than five times his number, being, as Justin says, six hundred thousand, and got the victory over them; here twenty thousand of the Persian footmen, and two hundred and fifty of their horse, wereslain, and not more than thirty nine of the Macedonians killed: Plutarch says, it was reported that the Persians lost twenty thousand footmen, and two thousand five hundred horse; and from Aristobulus he says, that the Macedonians lost only thirty four men, of which twelve werefootmen; and Diodorus Siculus relates that the Persians lost more than ten thousand footmen, and not less than two thousand horse, and morethan twenty thousand were taken: according to Justin, of Alexander's army there only fell nine footmen, and a hundred and twenty horsemen; others say, that of the Macedonians, twenty five men of Alexander's own troop fell in the first attack, about sixty other of the horsemen were killed, and thirty of the footmen; so different are the accounts of the slain in this battle; however, the victory appears to be very great, whereby Sardis, with all Darius's rich furniture, fell into the hands of Alexander, and all the provinces of the lesser Asia submitted to him. The next battle was foughtat Issus in Cilicia, where Darius had an army, according to Plutarch, consisting of six hundred thousand men; according to Justin, four hundred thousand footmen, and a hundred thousand horsemen, which was routed by Alexander; when a hundred thousand of the Persian footmen, and ten thousand of their horsemen, were slain; and only, on Alexander's side, five hundred and four of the footmen wounded, thirty two wanting, and a hundred and fifty of the horsemen killed: here also the accounts vary; Plutarch says above a hundred and ten thousand of the Persians were slain: according to Diodorus Siculus, three fell of them a hundred and twenty thousand footmen, and not less than ten thousand horsemen; and of the Macedonians three hundred footmen, and about a hundred and fifty horsemen; according to Arrian, the Persians lost ten thousand horsemen, and ninety thousand footmen; according to Justin, sixty one thousand footmen, and ten thousand horsemen, were slain, and forty thousand taken; and of the Macedonians there fell one hundred and thirty footmen, and one hundred and fifty horsemen; but, be it as it will, the victory was exceeding great, whereby the camp of Darius, his mother, wife, and children, and all his riches at Damascus, fell into the hands of Alexander, with all Syria. The third and last battle was fought near Arbela, or rather at Gaugamela in Assyria, when Alexander with fifty thousand men beat Darius with an army of eleven hundred thousand men: Plutarch says ten hundred thousand; forty thousand of which were slain, and of the Macedonians only three hundred or less were wanting; according to Arrian, thirty thousand were slain; but Diodorus Siculus says ninety thousand: this was the decisive battle; after this Babylon and Persepolis were taken by Alexander, and he became master of the whole empire ..."

It ought to be noted that the whole earth is "full" of the glory of the Lord (Isa 6:3). The earth is a theater in which God is revealing Himself, His purpose, and His great salvation. It is a stage on which the drama of redemption is being unfolded. For those with eyes to see, the Lord can summon an earthly power to do his will with a mere whistle, as it were.

As Isaiah said, "He will lift up a banner to the nations from afar, And will whistle to them from the end of the earth: Surely they shall come with speed, swiftly" KJKV (Isa 5:26). Again, with that Divine whistling, He can gather people together and increase them. The prophet Zechariah confirmed this also to be true. "I will whistle for them and gather them, For I will redeem them; And they shall increase as they once increased" NKJV (Zec 10:8).

With care, we must not stand in wonder at the exploits of Alexander the Great, for he also became powerless, as will all earthly rulers. If we are to marvel, let it be at the working of the Lord, who used that ancient Macedonian for His own glory, giving him genius and military success, then taking it from him in the prime of his life. Alexander was but a pawn on the trestle board of Divine purpose – a mere incident in God's workings in the earth. When he had served his purpose, his horn was broken!

THE HORN IS REPLACED FOR FOUR NOTABLE ONES

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

THE HE GOAT WAXES GREAT

"Therefore the he goat waxed very great ..." Other versions read, "magnified himself exceedingly," NASB/RSV "grew more powerful than ever," NJB and "hath exerted itself very much." YLT

The word "Therefore" means that following the crushing of the Persian empire, Alexander grew remarkably in power and influence. Other versions read "Then," NASB or following the overthrow of the ram.

This greatness, however, involved the exertion of "self." God gave Nebuchadnezzar power, but he exalted himself ascribing the greatness of his kingdom to his own accomplishments (Dan 4:30). Consequently, he was brought down. Although it is not specifically stated, this same principle must have been found in both Cyrus and Alexander. Flesh does have this tendency to exalt itself while enjoying visible success.

Alexander was about twenty years old when he began to reign. He was twenty-six when he overthrew the Persian empire. His kingdom then spread into the Idies, and throughout the whole world.

THE GREAT HORN IS BROKEN

"... and when he was strong, the great horn was broken ..." Other versions read, "as soon as he was mighty," NASB "at the height of his power," NIV "when he was at the strongest," GENEVA "but at the height of its strength," NJB and "at the peak of its power," TNK

The demise of the "notable horn," Alexander the Great, occurred when he was at the pinnacle of his power. He was young (32-33 years of age), the ruler of the world, with everything apparently going his way. The word of Solomon concerning one forward in heart, who devises evil, was fulfilled in him. "Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly; suddenly shall he be broken without remedy" (Prov 6:15). The power of Alexander did not gradually dissipate, or his kingdom slowly erode, and finally disappear. Rather, his reign was terminated suddenly when he was at the very peak of his influence.

It ought to be noted here that care must be taken not to boast in either success, or the ability to stand. As it is written, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:12).

Let there be no mistake about this, he was broken by God, for the Lord alone "removes kings" (Dan 2:21). This is a prophecy of the death of Alexander the Great, given at least two hundred and twenty-five years before it took place. Because there was no prophet at the time to interpret what actually happened, the Lord revealed the matter to Daniel.

Alexander did not merely die, he was "broken" – that is, his reign was terminated by the God of heaven. Alexandere broke the horns of the Medo-Persian kingdom, but God Himself broke his. Alexander was not murdered by an adversary as Belshazzar was (Dan 5:31). He was not violently overthrown like the last king of the Persians, Darius. He did not die in battle, but in a bed. The Britannica Encyclopedia records the following of his death. "Suddenly, in Babylon, while busy with plans to improve the irrigation of the Euphrates and to settle the coast of the Persian Gulf, Alexander was taken ill after a prolonged banquet and drinking bout; 10 days later, on June 13, 323, he died in his 33rd year; he had reigned for 12 years and eight months." BRITANNICA 2002 The heavenly perspective of that death is, "at the height of his power his large horn was broken off."

Countless books have been written about Alexander the Great. He is the subject of endless analysis by military strategists and historical analysts. However, when it comes to the Divine commentary on this impressive young ruler, our text uses 143 words! He is described as a great horn between the eyes of a he-goat from the West. He overpowered the great kingdom Medo-Persian kingdom, increased in greatness and strength, and was broken off at the height of his power. From heaven's point of view, and all who live by faith as well, he was not truly great at all. His kingdom, like all other kingdoms, was crushed by the kingdom of God!

It is no wonder that the Lord speaks so candidly to us concerning the fear of man. "Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?" (Isa 2:22). I do not doubt that many people sided with Alexander convinced his power would never cease. But it did cease, along with his influence and his very life. Believers must not be unduly impressed by the power of men.

FOUR HORNS COME IN ITS PLACE

"... and for it came up four notable ones . . ." Other versions read, "in place of it four notable ones came up," NKJV "in its place there came up four conspicuous horns," NASB "in its place four prominent horns grew up," NIV and "four other horns rose up in its place." Septuagint

By saying the four horns came up in the place of the one "notable horn," the angel means the Grecian empire continued in the hands of other rulers, even though Alexander suddenly died. When the last king of Babylon was slain, the kingdom of Babylon ended. When the final king of Persia was killed, the kingdom of the Medes and Persians ended. But the kingdom of Grecia did not end with the death of Alexander, its first king.

These "four notable ones," or horns, answer to the four heads of the leopard, which also depicted the Persian empire (Dan 7:6).

As history confirms, the "four notable ones" were Seleucus, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Cassander.

Seleucus ruled the Eastern part of the kingdom, with Syria and Babylon. Of him, the Britannica Encyclopedia says, "Macedonian army officer, founder of the Seleucid kingdom. In the struggles following the death of Alexander the Great, he rose from governor of Babylon to king of an empire centring on Syria and Iran."

Lysimachus ruled the Northern part of the kingdom, including all of Asia Minor. Of him the encyclopedia says, "Macedonian general, satrap (provincial governor), and king who, as one of the *diadochoi* ("successors") to Alexander the Great, came to rule strategic parts of the divided Macedonian Empire."

Ptolemy ruled over the Southern part of the kingdom, including Cyrene and Egypt. Of him the encyclopedia says, "Macedonian general of Alexander the Great, who became ruler of Egypt (323–285 BC) and founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty, which reigned longer than any other dynasty established on the soil of the Alexandrian empire and only succumbed to the Romans in 30 BC."

Cassander ruled the Western part of the kingdom, including Macedonia, Greece, and all of the neighboring countries. Of him the encyclopedia says, "Cassander was one of the *diadochoi* ("successors"), the Macedonian generals who fought over the empire of Alexander the Great after his death in 323. After Antipater's death in 319, Cassander refused to acknowledge the new regent, Polyperchon. With the aid of Antigonos I Monophthalmus, ruler of Phrygia, Cassander seized Macedonia and most of Greece, including Athens (319–317)." BRITANNICA 2002

The details of the rules of these four men are not provided in Scripture. The Lord revealed enough about them, however, so that His hand in history could be recognized – a history that was moving toward the revelation of an "everlasting kingdom," that would never be destroyed.

Toward the Winds of Heaven

"... toward the four winds of heaven." The expression "the four winds" generally denote everywhere, or from every quarter – like North, East, South, and West. Thus Jesus referred to the garnering of the elect as angels gathering "together His elect from the four winds of heaven, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt 24:31). On this saying Mark reads, "gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of earth to the uttermost part of heaven" (Mk 13:27).

One version reads "the four points of the compass." NASB All of the other versions read "four winds of heaven."

The idea presented in this expression is twofold. First, the entirety of the Grecian kingdom would be governed by four different rulers – yet the kingdom would remain a single one, and not four – like a leopard with four heads, or a he-goat that had four horns. Second, the divisions would be under the strict control of the Almighty God – "toward heaven." The primary purpose that would be served would be His own, not that of the empire of Greece, or of Alexander the Great!

NOT THE END OF THE MATTER

Matters relating to Persia and Greece are of such importance that this is not the end of matter. More will be said about them later in this chapter (8:20-22). An extended explanation of the overthrow of Persia will be provided in the tenth chapter (10:13-20).

The struggle of nations for worldly prominence is being set within the context of the kingdom of God. The affairs of men are being proclaimed as under the strict administration of the God of heaven.

Daniel is receiving a revelation from God that accounts for the fall of empires, two of which Daniel will see in power (Babylon and Medes and Persians), and two he will not see (Greece and Rome). All of them were subject to corruption, and their values decreased as they came. All of them were beastly, ruthless, heartless, and domineering. As they progressed they all tended to be divided, and as they divided they began to be weak. None of them could last any longer than appointed by God.

When God raised one of these kingdoms up, no one could withstand it. When He took them down, none could postpone their decline, or cause them to remain. There is a remarkable consistency in this truth that cannot be contradicted.

The understanding of these things will promote spiritual stability. It will bring a peace that will keep both heart and mind, and liberate from debilitating fear. As with "all Scripture," these things "are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). They have been "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom 15:4). Of such texts it may very well be said, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor 10:11-12). Let every soul take heed to this record, for in it are morsels that will sustain the soul.

CONCLUSION

What a marvelous text has been placed before us. It covers things that occurred under Divine Sovereignty during a period of Divine silence – a period of over four centuries. During this time there was no apparent government of, or from, God. In this time, no ruler could claim to have received direction or revelation from God like Nebuchadnezzar. No ruler could boast of being raised up by God, like Cyrus. No dignitary received a sign from God like Belshazzar. Although the God of heaven was imminent in the affairs of men, it was not evident. It was a lengthy period of time during which no Divine commentary in Scripture was originated. That, however, did not mean the things taking place at that time were insignificant. Therefore, they were revealed to Daniel well in advance of their actual occurrence.

The Jews were not prominent during this time, as they were during the reigns of David and Solomon. They were not called into any significant projects, as they were in the days of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. They remained largely under the oppression others, and were not significant.

The Prophets were not present, as they were during the Judges and Kings, and even during the Babylonian captivity itself. If someone sought a word from the Lord, there was no Samuel, or Elijah, or Jeremiah present. No one was commissioned to do the work of like Zerubbabel, Ezra, or Nehemiah.

There was no noticeable representative of God like Daniel, who could stand and interpret what was taking place in the world.

There would be no harbinger like John the Baptist, and no mighty exploits among the people of God, like David triumphing over Goliath, the defeat of Sennacherib, or deliverances like that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace, and Daniel from the lion's den.

Viewed from the standpoint of the flesh, it would appear as though God had abandoned the world. The heavens seemed to be brass.

Yet, God was ruling during this time, and do so in the interest of His people, and with a mind to fulfill His purpose. This long and dry period led to "the fulness of the time," when God sent His Son into the world (Gal 4:4).

SOME OBSERVATIONS

Every person and kingdom that functions without a conscious fellowship with God tends to deteriorate. If, with all of his intellectual superiority and abilities to organize, Alexander could not last more than twelve years as a king, and thirty years as a person, who is the individual who will dare to boast of their own abilities?

The world is not a hodgepodge of unrelated people and things. There is a grand purpose, established by God, that is the blueprint for history. Everything is moving toward the grand culmination of that purpose.

In one short vision, a period of no less than two hundred and twenty-five years has been covered. It has been seen as rather chaotic from the human point of view, but orderly and timely from the heavenly point of view. That is why we can learn from what has been revealed.

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE RAM AND THE HE GOAT #2

Lesson # 25

INTRODUCTION

In going through this vision, great care must be exercised not be diverted to academic or mere analytical approaches. We must remember that this is a revelation, not a subject for human speculation. By “academic approaches,” I mean a purely historical point of view. By “analytical approaches, I mean attempting to superimpose a humanly developed interpretation on the prophecy of the future. To be sure, there are historical realities and values to be gleaned from this text. As well, there are indications of things that will take place in the future. However, neither of these constitutes the hub of the text. We must engage both heart and mind to come away from this passage thinking soberly, and in accord with what the Lord intends for us to know. His purpose is NOT to open a limited Divine dialog that will spark the interest of men, and give them something to toss back and forth among themselves like a doctrinal ball. All too often, the book of Daniel is interpreted in precisely this way. This kind of approach has not proved profitable for others, nor will it be advantageous for us. God is not devoted to promoting mere scholarly discussion, but in advancing the faith and hope of His people.

There are times when God has spoken specifically about particular individuals, even mentioning them by name. Prophecies concerning the chastening work of Nebuchadnezzar were of this order. Jeremiah prophesied of the coming of “Nebuchadnezzar” several years before he actually came (Jer 27:6-8). The same thing is true of Isaiah’s prophecy concerning Cyrus (Isa 44:28). In both of these cases, the individual himself was of importance, as well as what was to be done by him. Both were to accomplish the will of God. The first related to the chastening of Israel, and the second to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple.

However, when it comes to evil workers, the Holy Spirit is not always so specific. Because their work is of such an evil order, their names are often withheld from us. This is not to say there are not specific individuals who fulfilled these prophecies – such as the one set before us. However, the identity of the person is not the critical matter. Therefore, if we insist on engaging in an inordinate quest to know precisely who the person is, we will deprive ourselves of the benefit of the text. Also, we must take great care not to end up in an area of thought where God Himself is pushed into background, or fear is pulled into the foreground. If what we conclude or say does not promote faith and hope, it is not likely that it is true.

THE NATURE OF VISIONS

A word should be said about the nature of visions. The Scriptures record a number of visions that were given to the prophets. A brief record of some of them is provided below.

- Isaiah: **The Lord in glory** (Isa 6:1-6)
 - Isaiah: **The valley of vision** (Isa 22:1-25).
 - Jeremiah: **The rod of an almond tree** (Jer 1:11).
 - Jeremiah: **The seething pot** (Jer 1:13).
 - Ezekiel: **The glory of God** (Ezek 1:3-14).
 - Ezekiel: **The roll of a book** (Ezek 2:9).
 - Ezekiel: **A man of fire** (Ezek 8:1-18).
 - Ezekiel: **Cherubim** (Ezek 10:1-7).
 - Ezekiel: **The valley of dry bones** (Ezek 37).
 - Ezekiel: **The city of God and the Temple of God** (Ezek 40).
 - Ezekiel: **The healing waters** (Ezek 47).
 - Daniel: **The four beasts** (Dan 7:1-8).
 - Daniel: **The Ancient of days** (Dan 7:9-10).
 - Daniel: **The ram and the he goat** (Dan 8:1-27).
 - Daniel: **An angel** (Dan 10:5-21).
 - Amos: **Grasshoppers** (Amos 7:1-2).
 - Amos: **Of fire** (Amos 7:4).
 - Amos: **A plumbline** (Amos 7:7-8).
 - Amos: **Summer fruit** (Amos 8:1-2).
 - Amos: **The Lord upon the altar** (Amos 9:1).
 - Zechariah: **A man on a red horse, with other horses behind him** (Zech 1:8-11).
 - Zechariah: **Four horns and ofur carpenters** (Zech 1:18-21).
 - Zechariah: **Joshua the high priest before the angel of the Lord** (Zech 3:1-5).
 - Zechariah: **The golden candlestick** (Zech 4:1-10).
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- Zechariah: **The flying roll** (Zech 5:1-4).
 - Zechariah: **Two brass mountains and two chariots** (Zech 6:1-8).

Others who had visions include Abraham (Gen 15:1), Jacob (Gen 28:12), Joshua (Josh 5:13-15), Moses (Ex 24:9-11), Balaam (Num 24:2-9), Elisha (2 Kgs 2:11), Michaiah (1 Kgs 22:17-23), Samuel (1 Sam 3:15), David (1 Chron 21:15-18), Job (Job 4:12-16), Nahum (Nah 1:1), Habakkuk (Hab 2:2), Zecharias (Lk 1:13-22), John the Baptist (Matt 3:16), Peter James and John (Matt 17:1-9), the women at the tomb (Lk 24:23), Stephen (Acts 7:55-56), Paul (Acts 16:9), Ananias (Acts 9:10-12), Cornelius (Acts 10:3), Peter (Acts 10:9-14), and John the Apostle. John alone was given to see at least sixty-three visions in the Revelation, ranging from the glorified Christ in chapter one to the tree of life in chapter twenty-two.

In nearly all of these visions, there was an overall thrust that emphasized what God Himself was doing. In many respects, visions were like parables. The details they outlined were not the real point, but the truth depicted by them. Further, while nearly all of them involved people and places, the accent was placed upon what would occur, and how it particularly related to the purpose of God. In no case were they mere commentaries on events that would take place among men.

DANIEL'S VISIONS

In the visions given to Daniel, we will behold the utter futility of contradicting the God of heaven . No one who fights God can possibly succeed! This is true of the people who bear His name – like the children of Judah. It will also be true of those He uses to chasten His people, like Nebuchadnezzar, and those He uses to recover holy places, Like Cyrus.

On the other hand, the Lord will also show Daniel that ultimately those who put their trust in Him will be given the kingdom . Even though it may appear as though they have been deprived of all of God’s promises, they will eventually inherit all things.

It will also be confirmed to our hearts that all worldly power is temporal, and tends to human pride and the opposition of God, His will, and His people . We must not allow any theological or favored view to hide these things from us. As soon as any of these realities become secondary in our thinking, we are on a religious bypath that does not end with Divine approval!

With these things in mind, I will proceed with the text. My intent is to carefully protect the overall view the Lord is promoting. While there are specific fulfillments of this text in history, and possibly things in the future as well, those events are not themselves the point of the text. We are being exposed to a Divine commentary on, and confirmation of, the following kingdom principles.

- The futility of a dominating and ostensibly enthroned evil. Although it prospers, it is only for a time.
- The impregnability of Divine purpose, and how nothing can thwart, change, or inhibit what God has determined.
- The impotence of humanity to stand against those to whom He gives power.
- The sureness of the promises of God. They are to be believed, and the fulfillment of them anticipated.
- The destiny of the saints of the Most High God will be fulfilled in the most precise detail. This will be done in spite of the rise of seemingly invincible worldly powers, and attacks that are most ruthless.

A LITTLE HORN COMES FORTH AND BECOMES STRONG

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

Daniel is being shown the progress of worldly kingdoms. Consideration is being given to the progress of the Grecian kingdom, which overthrew the Medes and the Persians. First we saw a he goat, then the focus was upon a single “notable horn” on that he goat. That was followed by the breaking of the notable horn and consequent surfacing of four “notable ones” that rose in its place. Thus the Grecian kingdom was perceived as a whole. Then the focus was placed on its first king, through whom the Medo-Persians were brought down. The attention then passed to four rulers who continued this empire. In all of this, the heavens were ruling, and nothing was out of control.

It may have appeared as though Satan was winning, working through idolaters and those who were not the people of God, as ordinarily perceived. But the devil was not winning, and the political entities that promoted violence and false religion

were not driving the history of the world. It is still true, “The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa 24:1). And again, “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Dan 4:35).

It is no different with the power now to be introduced. We will find it is a wicked power, but subservient to God. It will oppose God and His people, but will ultimately fail. We are not, therefore, to marvel at the influence of this power, but rather glorify God that it could not survive the judgment of the Almighty.

OUT OF ONE OF THEM

“And out of one of them came forth a little horn . . .” Other versions read, “out of one of them came a rather small horn,” NASB and “another horn, which started small.” NIV

Not the “little horn” of Chapter 7

This is not the “little horn” previously mentioned in chapter seven (7:8). That horn was said to “wear out the saints of the Most High,” who were given to him for a time, times, and half a time. He was also noted for deception, having a mouth that spoke great things (7:20). He also was deposed when his kingdom was taken away by judgment, and given to the saints (7:26-27). Additionally, that “horn” was related to the fourth beast, which was the Roman empire, surfacing amidst the ten horns, or kings, related to that empire.

This “little horn” is related to the third empire, which was Greece, and is depicted as springing from one of the four rulers who replaced the “notable horn,” Alexander the Great.

From One of the Four Notable Ones

I have already identified the four rulers called “notable ones” as Seleucus (Eastern), Lysimachus (Northern), Ptolemy (Southern), and Cassander (Western). While the “little horn” of chapter seven rose independently of the ten horns, supplanting three of them, this one proceeds from one of the four notable horns of Grecia. It is an extension of one of them.

It is generally understood that this “little horn” is fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes, who sprang out of the Seleucidaen kingdom in Syria – from Seleucus king of Syria. As we proceed through this passage, the probability of this being true will become more evident.

Antiochus Epiphanes is here considered a “little horn” because in the beginning it did not appear evident that he would be a significant ruler. He was the younger son of Antiochus the Great.

After securing the kingdom through “fraud, cruelty, and stratagem,” he assumed the title of Epiphanes, which means “the illustrious.” EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE It will become apparent that he was an especially evil man, as has been confirmed by both worldly and religious historians. His reign was from 176-164 B.C.

A Principle to be Seen

There is an important principle to be seen here. This “little horn” did not come from an honorable or godly source. It had heathen origins, or sprang out of a godless environment. In this we have confirmed that evil begets evil .

What is of itself morally wicked cannot produce something that is good. Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh” (John 3:6). The idea is that it can never be anything else. Flesh cannot be converted, reformed, or caused to be a source of God-honoring good.

In another place Jesus reminded us, “Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit” (Mat 12:33) And again, “For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Luke 6:43).

Ultimately, this ruler did not come from a good tree, but from an evil one. I say “ultimately” because I recognize there are some unusual circumstances in Scripture – like wicked Absalom coming from David, and faithful Rahab from Jericho. Therefore, this ruler, whom I believe to be Antiochus Epiphanes, is to be seen as one of Satan’s children, seeking to compete against, and even overthrow, the purpose of God.

WAXED EXCEEDING GREAT

“ . . . which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east...” Other versions read, “grew exceedingly great toward,” NASB and “grew in power to.” NIV

The idea is that this king expanded his kingdom toward the South and the East. Egypt was toward the South. In 170 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Egypt. Maccabean history records the following. “Now when the kingdom was established before Antiochus, he thought to reign over Egypt, that he might have the dominion of two realms. Wherefore he entered Egypt with a great multitude, with chariots, and elephants, and horsemen, and a great navy. And made war against Ptolemee king of Egypt: but Ptolemee was afraid of him, and fled; and many were wounded to death. Thus they got the strong cities in the land of Egypt, and he took the spoils thereof.” 1 Macc 1:16-19

Persia and other countries were in the East, toward which this wicked king also expanded his kingdom. Of these exploits books of the Maccabees records, “

“He saw that the money of his treasures failed, and that the tributes in the country were small, because of the dissension and plague which he had brought upon the land, and he feared that he should not be able to bear the charges any longer, nor to have such gifts to give so liberally as he did before; wherefore, being greatly perplexed in his mind, he determined to go into Persia, there to take the tributes of the countries, and to gather much money. So the king departed from Antioch, his royal city, the hundred forty and seventh year; and having passed the river Euphrates, he went through the high countries.” 1 Macc 3:21-37

The core army with which he pushed out the borders of his kingdom consisted of “46,000 foot soldiers . . . among them a Macedonian phalanx of 20,000 men and 500 mercenaries equipped with Roman arms, followed by 8,500 horsemen and 306 armoured elephants.” BRITANNICA 2002 He was powerful and rapid in his spread toward the South and East.

THE PLEASANT LAND

“ . . . and toward the pleasant land.” Other versions read, “toward the Glorious land,” NKJV “the Beautiful land,” NASB “the beauty of the earth,” DARBY “Land of Splendour,” NJB and “the glorious land of Israel” NLT

Conquering Egypt and countries in the East may have been significant in the realm of politics. However, it was only incidental in the Divine economy. This word concerning the aggression of the “little horn” who waxed great is particularly noted in heaven.

The “pleasant land” is “the land of the Jews” (Acts 10:39), and is mentioned by this name four times in Scripture. When

Antiochus Epiphanes thought to move against the “land of the Jews,” he made a strategic blunder from which he would not be able to recover.

- “Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word” (Psa 106:24).
- “But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me” (Jer 3:19)
- “And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land” (Dan 8:9).
- “But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate” (Zec 7:14).

Other references to this land accent its prominence in the Divine economy.

A Glorious Land

- “In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands” (Ezek 20:6).
- “Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands” (Ezek 20:15).
- “Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands” (Ezek 20:15).
- “But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed” (Dan 11:16).
- “He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon” (Dan 11:41).

God Calls it “MY Land”

Eight times God refers to the land of Israel, the promised land, as “MY land” (2 Chron 7:20; Isa 14:25; Jer 2:7; 16:18; Ezek 36:5; 38:16; Joel 1:6; 3:2). Five times the Prophets refer to it as “His land” (Deut 32:43; Psa 10:16; Ezek 36:10; Joel 2:18; Zech 9:16).

Other Stimulating References

To Moses, God referred to this land as “the Sanctuary” (Ex 15:17). Zechariah referred to it as “the holy land” (Zech 2:12). Hosea called it “the Lord’s land” (Hos 9:3). Isaiah speaks to the land as “O Immanuel” (Isa 8:8), and prophesies it will be called “Beulah” (Isa 62:4). Moses called it a “good land” (Deut 9:7), and “a land which the Lord thy God careth for” (Deut 11:12). Thirty-one times it is called “the land of Israel” (Josh 11:22; 1 Sam 13:19; 2 Kgs 5:2,4; 6:23; 1 Chron 13:2; 22:2; 2 Chron 2:17; 30:25; 34:7; Ezek 7:2; 11:17; 12:19,22; 13:9; 18:2; 20:38,42; 21:2,3; 25:3,6; 27:17; 33:24; 36:6; 37:12; 38:18,19; 40:2; 47:18; Matt 2:20,21). Once it is called “the land of the Jews” (Acts 10:39).

The Land Was Defiled

The Lord indicted and judged Israel because they “defiled” His land (Jer 2:7; 16:18). He told them if they forsook His

statutes and served other gods, He would “pluck them by the roots” out of His land (2 Chron 7:20). He judged nations who made His land their own possession (Ezek 36:5). The Lord also pledged to destroy those nations that “parted,” or “divided up” His land (Joel 3:2). Those who defiled this land or moved against it in personal ambition sealed their own doom.

It is difficult to conceive of a land in this world having any more prominence in the purpose of God. When, therefore, this king turned his attention toward “the pleasant land” – a land which God, in a particular way, claimed for His own – his deeds drew special attention. His advance against this land is not to be ignored, for it is an attack against God Himself, as will be confirmed. He is touching what belongs to God.

THE HORN WAXES GREAT, EVEN TO THE HOST OF HEAVEN

“ 10 And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.”

We now come to a description of this despotic power that is most challenging. Commencing with the spread of this ruler into “the pleasant land” of Israel, a different kind of language is employed. It is stronger, more significant, and indicates that something more was required to overcome this territory than was involved in overthrowing Egypt, or countries in the East.

EVEN TO THE HOST OF HEAVEN

“And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven . . .” Other versions read, “It grew up to the hosts of heaven,” NKJV “It grew until it reached the host of heaven,” NIV “It grew as high as the host of heaven,” NRSV “It magnified itself to the host of heaven,” Septuagint and “It grew right up to the armies of heaven .” NJB

The vision depicts the ruler of reference as a horn growing upwards until it penetrates the starry heavens. This reveals a Satanic type spirit, for it is said of our adversary, “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God : I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds ; I will be like the most High” (Isa 14:13-14).

When Antiochus Epiphanes came against “the pleasant land,” it was like a ruthless horn penetrating the heavens. He came into a land that belonged to God, and which was identified as “His land.” The ruler entered a place that was related more directly to the Lord than any other land. The people in that land were, in this world, like stars in the heavens.

CAST DOWN SOME OF THE HOST

“ . . . and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.” Other versions read, “caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth,” NASB “the some of the starry host to the earth,” NIV “pulling down some of the army, even of the stars, to the earth,” BBE and “and flung armies and stars to the ground.” NJB

We will learn later that this language refers to the overthrow of the people of God. Daniel will be given further details of this vision. Referring to the very ruler we are now considering, and to the very events we are not beholding, the prophet is told, “And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people ” (Dan 8:24).

The vision thus portrays Antiochus Epiphanes entering the holy land and casting down its leaders and rulers. He did

not thoroughly expunge the race, but only “cast down some” of them.

There is, however, an additional observation that I want to make on this passage. This overthrow of the people of God in God’s own land involved more than earthly warfare. We know from later revelations given to Daniel that the shaking of earthly powers also involves a disruption in lofty realms, where the principalities, powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world reside.

That reference is most remarkable, and is found in verses 13-21 of the tenth chapter. It will suffice only to mention it here, for I will deal more at length with it when we come to that section.

Suffice it to say, the occasion mentioned above found a holy angel detained for twenty-one days by a wicked prince. Furthermore, the battle was so fierce Michael the archangel had to help the angel. Additionally, the angel told Daniel he was going to return to that very battle, after which the “prince of Grecia” would come – another principality. It was then that the Grecian kingdom would arise – the very kingdom out of which the ruler of whom we are now speaking arose.

Antiochus Epiphanes was, then, driven and empowered by some wicked principality – one which compelled him to move against those who were aligned with the God of heaven. All of this was under the strict administration of God, as will be confirmed, and there was a Divinely established reason for it happening.

A Difficulty Introduced

I understand this does introduce some difficulties. The novice will ask, “Is not God more powerful than Satan? And are not the holy angels able to repel the advances of wicked angels?” Indeed, were we only speaking about angelic hosts and the powers of darkness, that would be true. However, we are now beholding how the affairs of men have been impacted by these powers, and that changes the entire picture. While God is Sovereign over the devil, and holy angels are more powerful than wicked ones, their involvement with men is directly impacted by the human condition .

Men Cannot Sin with Impunity

Men cannot sin with impunity – without it affecting God and the heavenly hosts. There is sufficient evidence of this throughout Scripture, even though some have conveniently chosen to ignore it in their theology. When Adam and Eve sinned, God, angels, and the devil himself were affected. God drove them out. An angelic spirit kept them out with a flaming sword. The devil gained fuller access to them. When the world refused to retain God in their knowledge, and violence finally filled the whole earth, it impacted upon God and the holy angels as well. God sent a flood upon the earth, and Enoch says He was attended by heavenly hosts in doing so (Jude 1:14-15).

For Israel, they were a “holy people” by Divine choice. However, they were a wicked and gainsaying people by personal choice. This condition gave wicked powers increased authority – although they by no means were omnipotent. God is not unrighteous, and thus will not lavish His care and grace upon those who insist on being sinful, even though He has revealed Himself to them.

The withdrawal of Divine protection is depicted in the words , “ and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.” This is similar, though not identical, to the case of Job, where the “hedge” was lowered (Job 1:10). Only God can grant access to things belonging to Him!

For the Land’s Sake

Notice how arresting the language is. Because the state of the people themselves was so deplorable before the Lord, the

Spirit says the little horn who waxed great came into “the pleasant land.” While his action might have appeared fully justifiable from the standpoint of the people, it was utterly wrong because of the God whose land he entered. If God’s people had not themselves “defiled the land” (Jer 3:9), this horn could not have grown up into heaven, pulled down some of its stars, and mercilessly trampled them.

FOR CLARIFICATION

For the sake of clarification, we are now being taught about the Israelites – the fleshly offspring of Abraham. That is why “the pleasant land” is introduced. The “saints of the Most High,” by comparison, do not have a land in this world. They have been made to sit “in heavenly places,” and are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 2:11). They too were assaulted, as was revealed in the revelation about the “little horn” of chapter seven. However, those events took place after Jesus had received the kingdom, together with all dominion and power. Daniel is now being shown how that very conflict was prefigured in Israel, prior to Christ’s enthronement. For Daniel, both events were in the future.

THE DAILY SACRIFICE REMOVED AND THE SANCTUARY CAST DOWN

“ 11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.”

Even if we could know nothing more of this text than the words themselves, our hearts and minds would be seriously affected by it. When we read of someone magnifying himself to, or up against, the prince of the host, taking away the daily sacrifice, and casting down the place of the sanctuary, we are reading of something that cannot be incidental. The language itself shouts of something that is of great significance. The land, the host, the sacrifice, and the sanctuary – all have to do with the God of heaven!

Remember, this is happening within the context of Judaism, and in “the pleasant land.” We will now see how this assault was viewed in heaven. Whatever we may observe from history – and there is much to be observed – we must not allow it to detract us from what actually was happening. History can blind our eyes to what really occurred, as well as assisting us to see something of earthly circumstances associated with the event. If we allow the light of God to illuminate historic events that are mentioned in Scripture, they will bring benefit to us. However, if we allow our attention to stop with them, our considerations will bring nothing of lasting benefit to us.

HE MAGNIFIED HIMSELF

“Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host . . .” Other versions read, “He exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host,” NKJV “It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host,” NASB “It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host,” NIV “Even against the Prince of the host it acted arrogantly,” NRSV “He extolled himself against the prince of the host,” GENEVA “It even challenged the power of the Prince of the army,” NJB “He even challenged the Commander of heaven’s armies,” NLT and “It vaunted itself against the very chief of the host.” TNK

The Sin of Self Magnification

To “magnify” ones self is to push self beyond the moral boundaries assigned to men. Men are to “magnify the Lord” (Psa 34:13; Luke 1:46), exalting Him, and assigning the glory and the power to Him. Because He is Himself supreme, the Lord can

Himself “magnify” people. He “magnified Joshua” (Josh 4:14) and Solomon (1 Chron 29:25), making them great. He magnifies His own mercy (Gen 19:19), and His Word (Psa 138:2), assigning greatness and effectiveness too them. God alone can rightly magnify people and things.

The strength of Moab was abruptly terminated because he “magnified himself against the Lord.” Thus it is written, “The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the LORD. Make ye him drunken: for he magnified himself against the LORD: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision” (Jer 48:25-26). In fact God said Moab would be “utterly destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the Lord” (Jer 48:42). When Jeremiah lamented the condition his people before the Lord, he called for mercy, “for the enemy hath magnified himself” (Lam 1:9).

The act of self-magnification, therefore, is a sin of the greatest magnitude. It will not be overlooked by the Lord. It is ever true, “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased” (Luke 14:11). The very fact, therefore, that any person in general, and Antiochus Epiphanes specifically, has magnified or exalted themselves mandates that they will fall, being brought down by the very God to whom they refused to submit.

The Prince of Hosts Is God

Some have taken this expression to refer to the high priest in those times. But such a lofty title was never assigned to a high priest. This is language that is only befitting of God Himself.

The Redeemer is referred to as the “Prince of peace” (Isa 9:6), “the Prince of princes” (Dan 8:25), “the Messiah the Prince” (Dan 9:25), “the Prince of life” (Acts 3:15), and “Prince and Savior” (Acts 5:31). An earthly ruler magnifying himself against another earthly ruler, or religious dignitary, would not be significant. Such things do not draw the attention of heaven. But when an assault is made against the people of God, the law of God, or the house of God, the matter at once is noted.

When, therefore, this ruler “magnified himself,” he did so against God. That is, by assigning preeminence to himself, he attempted to take it away from the God of heaven. His action was considered an attack against the Lord, even though it would prove utterly futile. Thus we read of individuals who are said to have “magnified himself against the Lord” (Jer 48:26,42), and groups who “magnified themselves against the Lord” (Zeph 2:8,10).

This Is Heaven’s View

It is important to note that this is heaven’s view of the situation. A news analyst would not have assessed the deeds of Antiochus Epiphanes in this manner. They would have viewed his assault as against the Jews themselves and their religion. In fact, the encyclopedia says of him, “His attempts to suppress Judaism brought on the Wars of the Maccabees.” BRITANNICA 2002 The activities of Antiochus Epiphanes was an act of self magnification, and was against the God of heaven. It was a bold, yet fruitless, initiative to usurp the throne of God.

An attack against the saints, or against what God has revealed, constitutes an attack against God Himself. That is how it is viewed from the heavenly chambers. Even Gamaliel knew this. When the Apostles were fiercely opposed by the Jewish council, he said, “But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God” (Acts 5:39). On another occasion, Paul fomented a conflict between the Sadducees and Pharisees by saying he was called into question concerning “the hope and resurrection of the dead.” Because the Sadducees denied the resurrection, the Pharisees declared, “We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God” (Acts 23:9).

For this reason we often are given the Divine perspective of words and deeds done against His people and His Word. Israel, for example, is said to have spoken “against God” in their murmurings (Num 21:5; Psa 78:19). The “carnal mind,” though energetically defended by men, is said to be “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). Achan’s covetous sin was said to be “against the Lord” (Josh 7:20). In assessing the death of king Saul, the Spirit says, “So Saul died for his transgression which he

committed against the LORD , even against the word of the LORD , which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it” (1 Chron 10:13). When a war broke out between Abijah and Jeroboam, Abijah spoke in defense of the Lord, urging the men to choose the right. He said, “O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers ; for ye shall not prosper” (2 Chr 13:12).

Consistently throughout Scripture, opposition to God’s people and His Word are viewed as opposition to God Himself. Thus we read of this ruler coming against the Prince of the host, engaging in an initiative against the God of heaven. From viewpoint of earth, it was an assault against the Jews, and an attempt to overthrow Judaism, or the religion of the Jews. But God took it personally.

There are several things revealed in this text.

- There was no authority this ruler respected.
- There was no authority or ruler he feared, or whom he was not forward to attack.
- He engaged in an assault against the God of heaven, who is the Prince of the host.

A Trend in Worldly Rulers

Before going further, I do want to observe that it is a tendency in earthly rulers to magnify themselves. Although there have been good and beneficent rulers, they have not been the norm. Men such as Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, and the likes, have overcome the corrupt tendencies that accompany earthly leadership. This is no doubt one of the reasons “supplications, prayers, and intercessions” are to be made “for kings, and for all that are in authority” (1 Tim 2:1-2). Notwithstanding that tendency, whenever a ruler magnified himself, as did Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Herod, and others, it is always duly noted by the God of heaven.

DAILY SACRIFICES TAKEN AWAY

“ . . . and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away . . . ” Other versions read, “it removed the regular sacrifice from Him,” NASB “it took away the daily sacrifice from Him,” NIV “it took the regular burnt offering away from Him,” NRSV “the continual burnt offering was taken away from Him,” RSV “and it took away from Him the continual sacrifice ,” DOUAY “abolished the perpetual sacrifice ,” NJB “cancelling the daily sacrifices offered to Him,” NLT and “on its account the regular offering was suspended.” TNK

Here is one of the things considered to be a direct initiative against the living God. The “little horn,” who waxed great, magnifying itself, terminated the daily sacrifices. This same transgression is committed by others who are classed with Antiochus Epiphanes (11:31). The cessation of the daily sacrifices is again mentioned in 12:11.

The Daily Sacrifices

The law for daily sacrifices was established by God, and was very clear. “Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs of the first year, day by day continually. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. With the one lamb shall be one-tenth of an ephah of flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of pressed oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine as a drink offering. And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight ; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning , for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you” NKJV (Ex 29:38-42).

This requirement is again specified in Numbers 28:3-4. “And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire

which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering . The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning , and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even .”

When the Lord revealed to Ezekiel the reestablishment of the Temple service, He specified a perpetual sacrifice, although no mention is made of the evening sacrifice. “And thou shalt prepare a meat offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of an hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat offering continually by a perpetual ordinance unto the LORD. Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat offering, and the oil, every morning for a continual burnt offering” (Ezek 46:14-15).

In opening up the High Priesthood of Christ, the Spirit referred to these sacrifices which were “offered year by year continually” (Heb 10:1).

The Reasoning Behind These Sacrifices

There were at least two reasons for these continual sacrifices.

First , sin, which is the transgression of the law, is so serious, a continual sacrifice was required to keep Divine wrath from breaking out upon the people. No day could pass without these sacrifices being made. Thus, from the higher view, a nonstop appeal was being made to the mercy of God.

Second , it was also necessary to prefigure the sacrifice of Christ, which is continually effective, and never without power. From this view, the continual sacrifices reminded God of the ultimate sacrifice He had appointed. In that sacrifice, the “offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10), God would be vindicated in being forbearing with the sins of those prior to Christ. Thus it is said of Jesus, “whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed” (Rom 3:25). It was in anticipation of His own Lamb that God refrained from utterly destroying the people of old. The daily sacrifices served to foreshadow that coming redemption.

With This In Mind

With this in mind, taking away the daily sacrifices, and causing them to cease, was a sin of monumental proportions. It was not merely an attack upon Judaism, as Antiochus Epiphanes and the historians imagined! This was something that had been directed by political statute toward the Lord Himself. The daily sacrifices were not presented to the people or the priests, but to the Lord. Therefore, when they were taken away, they were taken away from HIM – He was robbed of them, so to speak. Several of the translations underscore this. “. . . removed the regular sacrifice from Him ,” NASB “took away the daily sacrifice from Him ,” NIV and “the continual burnt offering was taken away from Him .” RSV

Note, “the daily sacrifice” did not cease out of mere neglect, which would have been bad enough. It was taken away “by him!” He intruded into the affairs of the people of God, and brought to an end something that God Almighty had ordained to be done every day!

Here was one small portion of the earth – a land God had chosen for Himself, and in which He had placed a people for Himself. In this special land, and among this chosen people, He had ordained certain sacrifices that were setting the stage for the coming Savior, who would impact the entire world. And what does Antiochus Epiphanes think of all of this? He sets his eye upon the “pleasant land,” and boldly moves against it. It forces his way into the activities of the chosen people and halts the daily sacrifice. Thus he magnified himself “against the Prince of the host.” NRSV

A full account of deeds against the sacrifices and the Temple is found in the book of First Maccabees. I here provide that passage. While it is not inspired, it is considered to be accurate Jewish history.

1:20 And after that Antiochus had smitten Egypt, he returned again in the hundred forty and third year, and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great multitude,

1:21 And entered proudly into the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof, And the table of the shewbread, and the pouring vessels, and the vials. and the censers of gold, and the veil, and the crown, and the golden ornaments that were before the temple, all which he pulled off.

1:23 He took also the silver and the gold, and the precious vessels: also he took the hidden treasures which he found.

1:24 And when he had taken all away, he went into his own land, having made a great massacre, and spoken very proudly.

1:25 Therefore there was a great mourning in Israel, in every place where they were;

1:26 So that the princes and elders mourned, the virgins and young men were made feeble, and the beauty of women was changed.

1:27 Every bridegroom took up lamentation, and she that sat in the marriage chamber was in heaviness,

1:28 The land also was moved for the inhabitants thereof, and all the house of Jacob was covered with confusion.

1:29 And after two years fully expired the king sent his chief collector of tribute unto the cities of Juda, who came unto Jerusalem with a great multitude,

1:30 And spake peaceable words unto them, but all was deceit: for when they had given him credence, he fell suddenly upon the city, and smote it very sore, and destroyed much people of Israel.

1:31 And when he had taken the spoils of the city, he set it on fire, and pulled down the houses and walls thereof on every side.

1:32 But the women and children took they captive, and possessed the cattle.

1:33 Then builded they the city of David with a great and strong wall, and with mighty towers, and made it a strong hold for them.

1:34 And they put therein a sinful nation, wicked men, and fortified themselves therein. They stored it also with armour and victuals, and when they had gathered together the spoils of Jerusalem, they laid them up there, and so they became a sore snare:

1:36 For it was a place to lie in wait against the sanctuary, and an evil adversary to Israel.

1:37 Thus they shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary, and defiled it:

1:38 Insomuch that the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled because of them: whereupon the city was made an habitation of strangers, and became strange to those that were born in her; and her own children left her.

1:39 Her sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness, her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into reproach her honour into contempt.

1:40 As had been her glory, so was her dishonour increased, and her excellency was turned into mourning.

1:41 Moreover king Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom, that all should be one people,

1:42 And every one should leave his laws: so all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king.

1:43 Yea, many also of the Israelites consented to his religion, and sacrificed unto idols, and profaned the sabbath.

1:44 For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Juda that they should follow the strange laws of the land,

1:45 **And forbid burnt offerings, and sacrifice, and drink offerings, in the temple; and that they should profane the sabbaths and festival days :**

1:46 And pollute the sanctuary and holy people: Set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts:

1:48 That they should also leave their children uncircumcised, and make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation:

1:49 To the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances.

1:50 And whosoever would not do according to the commandment of the king, he said, he should die.

1:51 In the selfsame manner wrote he to his whole kingdom, and appointed overseers over all the people, commanding the cities of Juda to sacrifice, city by city.

1:52 Then many of the people were gathered unto them, to wit every one that forsook the law; and so they committed evils in the land;

1:53 And drove the Israelites into secret places, even wheresoever they could flee for succour.

1:54 Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side;

1:55 And burnt incense at the doors of their houses, and in the streets.

1:56 And when they had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire.

1:57 And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament, or if any committed to the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death.

1:58 Thus did they by their authority unto the Israelites every month, to as many as were found in the cities.

1:59 Now the five and twentieth day of the month they did sacrifice upon the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God. At which time according to the commandment they put to death certain women, that had caused their children to be circumcised.

1:61 And they hanged the infants about their necks, and rifled their houses, and slew them that had circumcised them.

1:62 Howbeit many in Israel were fully resolved and confirmed in themselves not to eat any unclean thing.

1:63 Wherefore the rather to die, that they might not be defiled with meats, and that they might not profane the holy covenant: so then they died.

1:64 And there was very great wrath upon Israel.

1 Maccabees 1:20-64

It might be asked why God allowed such abuses to be wrought upon His people, and how such a wicked man could “take away” the “daily sacrifices.” In the verses that follow, this will be explained. However, until that time, I must say that a God who can tell you what a wicked king is going to do over three hundred years in the future, surely does not lack power to deal with him in whatever manner He pleases. Rather than ask WHY such atrocities occurred, we should lean forward to hear how God will speak on the matter.

Suffice it to say, we have in this king an example of the depths to which a man who does not know God can sink. We also see what wickedness a man is capable of when power over others is given into his hand. If God had not allowed such men to surface, having their own way for a season, men would have speculated about man’s innate wickedness, and never known the desperate need for a Savior. Even after such things have occurred, foolish men still choose to contend that man is fundamentally good. Such men surmise that if wickedness erupts in a person it is owing to some disease, physiological weaknesses, or psychological abnormalities.

Human reason cannot satisfactorily account for the depravity made known in Pharaoh, Sodom and Gomorrah, Manasseh, Herod, Pilate, and the likes. Scripture does, however, declare the reason for such vile expressions. It is that man “comes short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Should God choose to deliver men over to vile affections, they at once become capable of staggering outbursts of wickedness.

PLACE OF THE SANCTUARY CAST DOWN

“ . . . and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.” Other versions read, “the place of His sanctuary was thrown down,” NASB “overthrew the place of His sanctuary,” NRSV “the place overturned and the holy place made waste,” BBE “the holy place shall be made desolate,” Septuagint and “destroying His temple.” NLT

Although the Temple was not utterly destroyed by Antiochus Epiphanes, it was pillaged and its functionality destroyed.

The book of Maccabees records, “ And entered proudly into the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof, And the table of the shewbread, and the pouring vessels, and the vials. and the censers of gold, and the veil, and the crown, and the golden ornaments that were before the temple, all which he pulled off. He took also the silver and the gold, and the precious vessels: also he took the hidden treasures which he found.” 1 Maccabees 1:21-22

The Temple, which was the heart of Judaism, was no longer functional. Laws were passed and enforced that strictly forbade “ burnt offerings, and sacrifice, and drink offerings, in the temple .” 1 Maccabees 1:45

“His Sanctuary”

Daniel is told this was the place of “HIS sanctuary” – i.e., the place where God was identified with His people, received their sacrifices, and honored them as a people. Thus this king took God’s sacrifices from Him , and pillaged His sanctuary, so that it no longer served its intended purpose.

When Jesus dwelt among men, He referred to the Temple of His day as “My Father’s house” (John 2:16). When He was a twelve year old boy, and his “parents” found Him in the Temple, He told them He had to be about “His Father's business,” thereby associating the Temple with His Father and what He was doing (Lk 2:49). Other references to the Temple include the following.

- Temple of the Lord (2 Kgs 11:10).
- Holy Temple (Psa 79:1).
- Holy House (1 Chron 29:3).
- House of God (2 Chron 23:9)
- House of the Lord (2 Chron 23:5).
- The House of the God of Jacob (Isa 2:3).
- The House of My glory (Isa 60:7).
- Sanctuary (2 Chron 20:8).

Originally, when Solomon built the Temple, he was impressed with the greatness of God, and the inability of any house to contain Him. He therefore acknowledged the house was primarily for burning sacrifices to the Lord. “But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him ?” (2 Chron 2:6). That was a staggering insight!

With this in mind, you see the magnitude of the transgression of Antiochus Epihanes, who took away the sacrifice – God’s sacrifice – and cast down the Temple where the sacrifices were made. His was a transgression of unspeakable magnitude.

A HOST WAS GIVEN TO HIM

“ 12 And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered.”

An explanation is now given for the seeming liberty with which Antiochus Epihanes operated. It was not self-power that enabled him to invade “the pleasant land,” take away sacrifices belonging to God, and cast down the sanctuary.

A Reason for the Position

Before proceeding further, I also want to reaffirm WHY I am applying this prophecy to Antiochus Euphianes, and not to someone who will appear in the future. This ruthless ruler is said to come from one of the four kings that replaced the “notable horn” on the he goat (8:8-9). That horn is specifically said to be the “first king” of Grecia, or Greece (8:21). Antiochus Euphianes’ rule was, in fact, an extension of the Seleucian kingdom, which was first ruled by Seleucus, one of the “four notable ones” that followed the death of Alexander the Great – when his horn was “broken.”

I do understand that some notable expositors have taken the position the “little horn” is the Roman government, which started very small and grew to great prominence. Newton However, this would not allow for the sequence of the governments given in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and the first vision of Daniel. In each of them, Governments arose independently of each other, and none were an extension of the previous one. The “little horn” of Daniel eight is an extension of the he goat, which is specifically said to be the kingdom of Grecia. To me, this does not allow for the “little horn” of chapter eight being the Roman government.

Others take the position that “little horn” of chapter eight is the same as the “little horn” of chapter seven. This is largely based upon the expression “little horn,” and is wholly improper. The “little horn” of chapter seven is said to have sprung out of the ten horns that were on the fourth beast (7:8). In order for this to be the same “little horn” referenced in chapter eight, the fourth beast would have to be Greece, and not Rome. And, indeed, some contend that this is the case. However, such a position now distorts the continuity of the visions. The second section of Nebuchadnezzar’s image is identified as the kingdom that displaces Babylon. God specifically revealed to Belshazzar that this was the “Medes and Persians” (5:28). The third kingdom would displace the Medes and Persians, which is declared in this chapter. The “he goat” is said to be Grecia, the ram with two horns that it overthrew is identified as “the kings of Media and Persia” (8:20).

While it should be very obvious, I will reaffirm that the “little horn” of chapter eight is not the “little horn” of chapter seven. The “little horn” of chapter seven made war with the saints, and was followed by the saints possessing the kingdom (7:25-27). This was within the framework of the exalted Christ, who had received the kingdom (7:13-14).

While I do not choose to be contentious about this, I am going to proceed with the text viewing Antiochus Euphianes as that “little horn” which waxed great and entered “the pleasant land.” I take this to be the primary fulfillment of the text, acknowledging that in it there is a type of other opponents of the truth and saints of God.

A HOST GIVEN TO HIM AGAINST THE DAILY SACRIFICE

“And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice . . .” Other translations present a somewhat confusing picture. “An army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices,” NKJV “the host will be given over to the horn along with the daily sacrifice,” NASB “the host of the saints and the daily sacrifice were given over to it,” NIV “the host was given over to it together with the regular burnt offerings,” NRSV and “But the army of heaven was restrained from destroying him for this sin.” NLT

Confusion Cultivated

In these various translations (if that is what they can be properly called), the following views are presented. It will be obvious that considerable confusion is cultivated by them.

- A host was given to this ruler that enabled him to successfully oppose the daily sacrifices.
- A host of Jews was given over to him in addition to the daily sacrifices; that is, that the people offering the sacrifices and the sacrifices themselves were given to him.

- That angelic hosts were restrained from stopping this ruler from oppressing the people and taking away the sacrifices.
- Others think the text means that a host of advisors was given to the ruler who counseled him to take away the daily sacrifices. Jacchiades

“The Host”

The “host” of reference are the Jews in general, and particularly those who were associated with battle, or defending the city an Jerusalem and the Temple. The Hebrew word used here is **ab' c'w>** (tsaw-baw), which is often translated “armies.” When the Lord told Moses He was going to deliver Israel from Egypt, He used this word, saying He would “bring forth Mine armies” [“hosts,” NASB] (Ex 7:4). He later spoke of that great exodus as the day He “brought your armies [“hosts,” NASB] out of the land of Egypt” (Ex 12:17). In recording the events of the exodus, the Scriptures say, “It came to pass that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt” (Ex 12:41).

This same word is used to describe those who served the tabernacle. Such servants are referred to in Numbers 4:3: “From thirty years old and upward even until fifty years old, all that enter into the host [“the service” NASB] , to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation.”

I therefore understand the passage to mean that the host related to the offering of the sacrifice and the general service of the Temple, were “given” to this wicked ruler, else he could not have overcome the people and ended the daily sacrifices. Created beings cannot intrude upon Divine possessions.

The Spirit’s Setting

In order to obtain the profit intended by the Lord, the setting revealed by the Spirit must be considered. The statement of this text is to be view within the light that has already been focused on this ruler.

- He waxed great toward “the pleasant land,” focusing his attention on it. 8:9
- He grew in power, casting down luminaries and powers related to “the pleasant land” – that is, Jewish leaders. 8:10
- He magnified himself against the Prince of hosts, who is the Lord Himself, daring to oppose the God of heaven. 8:11a
- He took away the daily sacrifice which belonged to the Lord. 8:11b
- He cast down the sanctuary of God. 8:11c

None of these things could have been accomplished by mere human power. They cannot be explained within the context of earthly governments, fleshly wisdom, and worldly aptitude.

Therefore, the heavenly messenger provides the true explanation for this travesty. The “host” given to him is the one mentioned in verse ten. The “daily sacrifice” is the one he took away, or caused to cease. What Daniel is now seeing is the explanation for that wicked triumph.

The Case of Job

The people and the daily sacrifice were given into his hand by God Himself. It is precisely the same kind of thing God

did in the case of Job. When Satan said Job would “curse Thee to Thy face” if God put forth His hand and touched his possessions, the Lord gave Job’s possessions into his hand. “And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power ; only upon himself put not forth thine hand” (Job 1:12), Again, when Satan challenged the Lord to put His hand against Job, saying he would “curse Thee to Thy face,” God gave Job into his hand. “And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand ; but save his life” (Job 2:6). In both of these cases, the reason for giving Satan power against Job was in order to confirm the patriarch would NOT curse the Lord, but would rather stand. It was not owing to any sin in Job’s life. The allocation of power was also accompanied with restrictions. The devil could only go so far, and the time of his power was limited.

The Case of the Lord Jesus

The supreme example of a righteous man being given over to godless men is the Lord Jesus Christ. God gave Pilate power over Him. Jesus said to Pilate, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above : therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin” (John 19:11). Prior to that, when Jesus was arrested in the Garden, He told the soldiers they were powerless to take Him before that. However, they had now been given power to do so. That is why He said to them, “When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour , and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). As in the case of Job, the power given to these men was limited. They could only do so much, and their time was restricted.

There were other righteous men over whom the wicked were given power. They include Joseph, the Prophets, John the Baptist, and the Apostles. If we can account for the temporary triumph of their enemies by seeing God gave them their power, how much more is this true when the people over whom power was given were sinful? There are numerous instances of this in Scripture – times when the Lord gave His people over to their enemies. If He did not do so, their enemies could not have triumphed over them – even in a fallen state.

- He delivered Israel “into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies” (Judg 2:14).
- The Lord delivered Israel “into the hand of Midian seven years” (Judg 6:1).
- He delivered them “into the hand of the Philistines forty years” (Judg 13:1).
- He once delivered them “into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, all their days” (2 Ki 13:3).
- Again, because of their grievous sin, “the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight” (2 Kgs 17:20).
- When the host of Samaria came out against Israel, and treated them too brutally, the Lord send Oded to them, who said, “Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven” (2 Chr 28:9).

These references could be multiplied many fold. There is so much about this matter in Scripture, it boggles the mind to consider how it is so easily missed. Take, for example, the book of the Revelation. All manner of judgments are declared in this book. There are even triumphs over the saints themselves. Yet, in the midst of these awful declarations, it is stated no less than twenty-one times, that the power exhibited was “given” to them by God, whether for good or for evil (6:2,4,8,11; 7:2; 8:2,3; 9:1,3,5; 11:1,2; 12:14; 13:5,7; 16:6,8; 20:4).

In our text, the astounding manner in which Antiochus Euphianes came against God’s “pleasant land,” took away God’s “sacrifices,” and plundered God’s “sanctuary,” can only be accounted for by God giving him the power to do so. There is no need to speculate on this matter, for Scriptures are literally filled with such judgments. Not the least of these judgments is the sacking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. After the “servants of Nebuchadnezzar” attacked Jerusalem (2 Kgs 24:10), and

Nebuchadnezzar himself swept into the “holy city” (2 Kgs 24:11), “Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon,” came “unto Jerusalem: and he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about” (2 Ki 25:8-10). In this very capacity, God referred to Nebuchadnezzar as “my servant” (Jer 27:6). Had God not given Jerusalem into his hands, together with its people, he would have been overthrown like Sennacherib before him (2 Chron 32:21).

BY REASON OF TRANSGRESSION

“ . . . by reason of transgression.” Other versions read, “because of transgression,” NKJV “on account of transgression,” NASB “because of rebellion,” NIV and “because of wickedness.” NRSV

Some have taken this transgression to refer to the initiative of the little horn who waxed great. In this view, because of the heinousness of his own transgression he took away the daily sacrifice and cast down the sanctuary. I find this too foolish a notion to even address. It would have hosts given to him because of his transgression – a sort of reward for being wicked.

The transgression of reference is that of Israel, for the people of God are not punished for the sins of Gentile kings! Although the people had precious come to the end of the Babylonian captivity, began returning to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel, revived the ancient order under Ezra, and rebuilt the walls under Nehemiah, they still regressed again into sin!

Malachi, who, along with Nehemiah, lived in the middle of the 400's B.C. spoke throughout his book of the spiritual poverty of the nation. His words are most arresting! This was around eighty years after Daniel died.

- They “despised” the name of the Lord (Mal 1:6).
- They offered polluted bread upon His altar (1:7).
- They offered animal sacrifices of the blind, halt, and lame (1:8).
- They profaned the table of the Lord (1:12).
- They were weary of their revealed religion (1:13).
- The priests departed from the ways of the Lord and caused the people to stumble (2:8).
- The priests were partial in their judgment, not administering the Law correctly (2:9).
- They profaned the covenant (2:10). Judah profaned the holiness of God by marrying the daughter of a strange God (2:11).
- The people wearied the Lord with their words (2:17a).
- They said the ones doing evil were good in the sight of the Lord (2L17b).
- They robbed God (3:8-9).

- Their words were stout against the Lord (3:13).
- They said it was vain to serve the Lord (3:14).
- They called the proud happy (3:15).

After a seventy-year chastening in the Babylonian captivity, the people still returned to their sinful ways. They did so in spite of the marvelous awakening and work of Zerubbabel's time, the resurgence of hope in Ezra's time, and the advancements in Nehemiah's time. Iniquity still swept in like a flood.

Do such departures from the truth have any impact upon the God of heaven? Is it possible for His own people – the ones He has chosen – to so provoke Him that He actually comes to despise them? Some of the sophists of our day would have us believe this cannot be. But that is only because they are blind and sitting in darkness. Such men should never find a hearing among the people of God, like wayward priests in Malachi's day were heard by the people! It is said of the Lord, "Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance" (Psa 106:40). Knowing the Lord's reaction to His people, Maschil the musician cried out to the Lord, "O God, why hast Thou cast us off for ever? why doth Thine anger smoke against the sheep of Thy pasture?" (Psa 74:1).

Jeremiah lamented the judgment of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. His language could well be applied to the very text we are reviewing. "The Lord hath cast off His altar, He hath abhorred His sanctuary, He hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces" (Lam 2:7).

This very condition is what provoked the Lord to give Antiochus Euphron power against His people, His sacrifice, and His sanctuary.

What Antiochus Euphron did to the Jews was terrible, ruthless, and beastly to the extreme. However, if you get high enough, what Israel did in forsaking God, despising His altar, robbing Him, and viewing His ordinances as wearisome, was infinitely worse. It was because they sinned against greater light.

Every sensitive heart ought to be able, to take these things and view the present condition of the church with some degree of insight.

TRUTH CAST TO THE GROUND

“. . . and it cast down the truth to the ground . . ." Other versions read, "fling truth to the ground," NASB "truth was thrown to the ground," NIV and "truth was overthrown." NLT

The meaning is that the truth of God, particularly as revealed in the Law, or first covenant, was no longer accessible to men. Antiochus Euphron actually did remove the Scriptures, aggressively seeking to expunge them from the face of the earth. Again, I turn to the book of Maccabees, which is to Jewish history what school books today are to American history. "And when they had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire. And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament, or if any committed to the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death." (1 Macc 1:56-57). Thus truth was cast down to the ground.

If truth is not used, it will be withdrawn from the people! This is an exceedingly difficult thing to grasp, but it is a matter of revelation. Amos declared a condition that is like truth being cast down to the ground – and it was a condition caused by God. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men

faint for thirst” (Amos 8:11-13). That is another view of truth being cast to the ground. In our text, a particular ruler is identified who did this.

The condition of Israel is highlighted by the fact that she herself was also guilty of this sin. She had allowed the truth to die in her streets! Thus Isaiah lamented, “for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no judgment” (Isa 59:14-15). That is why this wicked king was given power against her. That is why he was given power to cast the truth down to the ground. The people of God had neglected and abused it, and thus it was taken from them. They fell into “the hands of the living God.” Their experience occurred and is written for our learning!

The Principle

Jesus said, “For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath” (Mark 4:25). Matthew’s account reads, “but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him” NKJV (Mat 13:12).

Ultimately unfaithful stewards will have their goods taken from them in the day of judgment. However, such losses often begin in this world. Adam and Eve had their stewardship of Eden’s garden removed. Esau despised his inheritance, bartered it for a meager meal, and never got it back. King Saul proved unfaithful, and thus his kingdom was given to another. Those who have been given much do well to be faithful in handling it.

The requirement God placed upon the priests of old is still applicable to those who are in Christ Jesus. “Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD” (Isa 52:11). Does this not remind you of the word delivered particularly to the church? “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you” (2 Cor 6:17).

If truth has been cast down in our day, perhaps it is because those into whose hands it had been entrusted have not proved faithful in their handling of it. After all, the church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15). Her ministers are told, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” NASB (2 Tim 2:15).

IT PRACTICES AND PROSPERED

“... and it practiced, and prospered.” Other versions read, “He did all this and prospered,” NKJV “it will... perform its will and prosper,” NASB “It prospered in everything it did,” NIV “and kept prospering in what it did,” NRSV and “The horn succeeded in everything it did.” NLT

The idea is this: even though this horn did such wickedness as to enter the “pleasant land,” make an end of God’s sacrifices, and cast down God’s sanctuary, it still prospered in everything it did. Such a circumstance seems to defy all reasoning. Yet, we have been told the success was because, and only because, power was given to it by God. Furthermore, that power was not granted because of any virtue found in the horn. Rather, it was because of the transgression of the people of God. Their sin, then, affected a territory significantly larger than their own boundaries. The success of this miserable horn, like that of Nebuchadnezzar, was due to the sins of God’s people. Had they been faithful, Antiochus Ephiphanes would have fallen to them!

An Application

Here we have a key to some of the declarations of the Revelation. When describing “Babylon the great,” the Apostate church, she was called “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Rev 17:5). The success of worldly kingdoms was traced to her, for they mourned when she fell. It is said of those who marketed worldly things, “And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more” (Rev 18:11). The success of these marketers was owing to corrupt religion! Spiritual harlotry has bred all manner of wickedness in the earth. Such things are worthy of much thought and cogitation.

HOW LONG? HOW LONG?

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

Daniel is now made privy to a lofty conversation. The vision itself has concluded for the moment, and the prophet overhears some heavenly dialog concerning it. The nature of the conversation reveals an intense interest in the government of God. It provides some additional insight into the angelic interest in the Gospel we have been given to understand. “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven; things which angels desire to look into ” NKJV (1 Pet 1:10-12).

An Observation

Wherever God is known to any measurable degree, earnest inquiry is made into His Word and works. This includes the heavenly chambers as well as the earth, which is the Lord’s footstool (Isa 66:1). The absence of interest in the things of God is confirmation that God is not known. I realize this statement has alarming ramifications, but it is nevertheless true. An understanding of it will assist us in correctly evaluating many of the seemingly religious circumstances of our time.

On earth, true religion is too often a novelty, worthy only of some time and effort now and then. But this is not so when the Lord is known. The knowledge of God moves those who possess it beyond the borders of casualness and distinterest – and those characteristics DO cause impenetrable borders. As soon as the heart becomes casual or perfunctory, a wall of obscurity is thrown up between the individual and God. That wall cannot be scaled by human wisdom. This is precisely what is reflected in the statement, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14).

It always reflects a most serious condition when a person wearing the name of Christ does not pursue “spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9).

HOW LONG?

One Saint Speaking

“Then I heard one saint speaking . . . ” We are not told what this angelic personage was saying. From the response of the other “saint,” we assume it concerned the things that were being revealed to Daniel. That circumstance is most intriguing! When holy angels speak among themselves about matters revealed to the sons of men, it indicates what marvelous things have been vouchsafed to those who have faith in God. In the day of judgment, I imagine one will be hard pressed to explain why matters that solicited the attention of holy angels were despised and ignored among men.

The Desire to Know

“ . . . and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily

sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?”

The Daily Sacrifice

The inquiring angel knows that matters of great gravity have been made known to Daniel. During the time of the New Covenant, the cessation of the daily sacrifice would be of no consequence, for God invalidated those sacrifices when Jesus offered Himself. However, under the Old Covenant, this was a most serious matter. The matter concerning “the daily sacrifice” was this: “the daily sacrifice was taken away” (8:11). The time into which the angel inquires, therefore is pre-Christian, not after the exaltation of Christ Jesus the Lord.

The Transgression of Desolation

Other versions read, “the transgressions causes horror,” NASB “the rebellion that causes desolation,” NIV “the transgression that makes desolate,” NRSV “the bringing in of the sin of desolation,” Septuagint and “the transgression of desolation.” WEBSTER

The “desolation,” is a devastation so great that it causes amazement among both men and angels. God’s sacrifice is taken away. The sanctuary of God is plundered and cast down. Truth is thrown down to the ground. The whole thrust of revealed religion is thus neutralized, and the people of God become utterly powerless. This is a spiritual desolation when, for the most part, all things pertaining to God were taken from the people. It is called “the transgression of desolation ” because it was brought on by the sinful presumption of the Jews. Their heartless and perfunctory service to God, as described by Malachi, had unleashed the wrath of God against them, and they were made desolate. Spiritually speaking, they became an arid desert.

The Sanctuary

The sanctuary, intended for God, together with those who ministered in it, fell into the hands of wicked men:” to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? ” Other versions read, “ the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot,” NKJV “so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled,” NASB “ the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled under foot,” NIV and “ the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot.” ESV

The angel knows that Antiochus Ephiphanes could never have dominated the sanctuary and the host if they had not been “given” to him. He also knows the arrangement cannot be permanent, and that it must have an appointed conclusion. Such a condition must have a cessation. He therefore inquires how long these conditions will be permitted by God.

The question “How long?” is found frequently in Scripture.

- David asked the Lord about the vexation of his own soul. “My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, HOW LONG ?” (Psa 6:3).
- Again, during a time of chastening he asked the Lord, “ HOW LONG wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? HOW LONG shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?” (Psa 13:1-2).
- When the enemy continued to reproach the people of God David asked, “O God, HOW LONG shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?” (Psa 74:10).

Again he asked, “ HOW LONG , LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?” (Psa 79:5).

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- When the prayers of the people were not being answered, the Psalmist pled, “O LORD God of hosts, HOW LONG wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?” (Psa 80:4).
- In keeping with the passage consider that David asked, “LORD, HOW LONG shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?” (Psa 94:3).
- When Isaiah was told God would make the heart of the people “fat,” and their ears “heavy,” so that they would not be able to understand, Isaiah asked, “ HOW LONG ?” (Isa 6:10-11).
- When Habakkuk witnessed the spread of violence and ungodliness among the people, he pled with the Lord, “O LORD, HOW LONG shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!” (Hab 1:2).
- John the beloved saw martyrs souls under the altar – souls that had been slain for the word of their testimony. They were asking, “ HOW LONG , O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Rev 6:10).

Divine Government Assumed

There is an underlying assumption in the question “How long?” It is that God is the “Governor among the nations” (Psa22:28). The duration of hardship is under His strict control. It can neither be initiated nor continued independently of Him.

This understanding neutralizes the power of calamity for those who will believe. Not only is there a just reason for what occurs, there is also a point at which it will terminate. In the case of chastening, for example, there is a terminal point. Therefore, “ afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb 12:11). The triumph of the wicked is also only for a time – an appointed time – for eventually all enemies will be put under Christ’s feet, openly and apparently (1 Cor15:25).

The angel has asked about the Divine timetable. What has been “determined?”

HE SAID UNTO ME

“And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” Other versions read “2,300 evenings and mornings,” NASB/NIV/NRSV

The word translated “days” literally means “evening-mornings,” and is derived from the concept of a “day” introduced in Genesis, where the same word is used: “ the evening and morning was the ____ day” (Gen 1:5,8,13, 19,23,31). That is why several translations read “2,300 evenings and mornings.” It is concluded, therefore, that these are 24-hour days, and not a symbolic use of day, as when a day stood for a prophetic year (Num 14:34; Ezek 4:6).

Some have taken the position that the “evening and morning” do refer to the two sacrifices offered each day. That would cause the text to mean “after 2,300 sacrifices,” or 1,150 days. With all of the disagreement on what the days signify, there is near-total unanimity among students of Scripture as to the fulfillment of the statement. Antiochus Epiphanes is considered to be the person involved. The only difference is in how men calculate the period of time the devastation he instituted would continue. Whether they do so from the beginning of Antiochus Ephiphanes defilement of the temple, or from the time he outlawed the daily sacrifice. But the villain remains the same, as well as the cleansing of the sanctuary.

The duration of the oppression would be until the sanctuary was “cleansed,” or returned to its proper use, with sacrifices being offered to God and the sanctuary devoted to His service. If , then, we can identify when the sanctuary was

cleansed, and returned to its rightful use, we should be able to identify more precisely the period of 2,300 days, or evenings and mornings. That would be six years, three months, and eighteen days.

It is generally conceded that the sanctuary was cleansed by Judas Maccabeus, who purified the holy places, sanctified the courts, rebuilt the altar, renewed the vessels of the sanctuary, and put all in their proper places. The book of the Maccabees records the following.

“41 Then Judas appointed certain men to fight against those that were in the fortress, until he had cleansed the sanctuary. 42 So he chose priests of blameless conversation, such as had pleasure in the law: 43 Who cleansed the sanctuary, and bare out the defiled stones into an unclean place. 44 And when as they consulted what to do with the altar of burnt offerings, which was profaned; 45 They thought it best to pull it down, lest it should be a reproach to them, because the heathen had defiled it: wherefore they pulled it down, 46 And laid up the stones in the mountain of the temple in a convenient place, until there should come a prophet to shew what should be done with them. 47 Then they took whole stones according to the law, and built a new altar according to the former; 48 And made up the sanctuary, and the things that were within the temple, and hallowed the courts. 49 They made also new holy vessels, and into the temple they brought the candlestick, and the altar of burnt offerings, and of incense, and the table. 50 And upon the altar they burned incense, and the lamps that were upon the candlestick they lighted, that they might give light in the temple. 51 Furthermore they set the loaves upon the table, and spread out the veils, and finished all the works which they had begun to make.” (1Maccabees 4:46-51).

It surely is not mere coincidence that from the day Antiochus set up the abomination upon the altar in the fifteenth day of the month Cisleu, in the year 171 B.C., until the victory over Nicanor by Judas, on which day the Jews kept the annual feast, on the thirteenth day of Adar, 165 B.C. is 2,300 days, or six years, three months, and eighteen days.

If, as some reckon the 2,300 evenings and mornings, this period stands for 2,300 sacrifices, or 1,150 days, the period is still remarkably precise. In this view, to which I do not subscribe, the period would be equal to three and a half years – the period during which the daily sacrifice was forbidden by Antiochus Epiphanes. [JOSEPHUS, Wars of the Jews, 1:1.1]

The book of Maccabees records that “cleansing” in these words, “52 Now on the five and twentieth day of the ninth month, which is called the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and eighth year, they rose up betimes in the morning, 53 And offered sacrifice according to the law upon the new altar of burnt offerings, which they had made.” (1 Maccabees 4:52-53).

The Feast of Dedication

When Judas Maccabeus re-consecrated the whole service of God, cleansing the sanctuary of the heathen defilements brought into it, a festival of eight days was instituted. This is understood to be the “the feast of dedication” mentioned in John 10:22, and said to have been in the “winter.” Jesus honored this feast with his presence. As it is written, “And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch” (John 10:22-23).

This particular feast (“the feast of dedication”) was one of renewal, for the word “dedication” means “renewal,” or a fresh start. Concerning this feast, the Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature says the following.

“(**ta< ejgkai>nia** , the renewal, John 10:22 [which the Sept. has in Numbers 7:10]; Vulg. *encania*), the festival instituted to commemorate the purging of the Temple and the rebuilding of the altar after Judas Maccabaeus had driven out the Syrians , B.C. 164 (1 Maccabees 4:52-59, where it is **O` ejgkainismo<v tou~ quasiathri>ou** , the restoration of the altar, because the old and profaned altar was then replaced ; but in 2 Maccabees 10:5, **o` kaqarismo<v tou~ naou~** , the purification of the Temple : the modern Jews call it simply *chanukah* , **hk;Wnj}** [“dedication,” as occurs in Numbers 7:10, 11, 84, 88; 2 Chronicles 7:9; Nehemiah 12:27; Psalm 30, title; Ezra 6:16, 17; Daniel 3:2, 31, as in the Mishna; but Josephus, *Ant.* 12:7, 7, styles it **fw~ta** , *lights*).

While it is not my practice to do this, I do want to confirm the unanimity among Biblical commentators on this subject. Namely, that “the feast of dedication” of John 10:22, is the official Jewish remembrance of the cleansing of the sanctuary, or

Temple, mentioned in Daniel 8:14. This is only a small sampling of the agreement of men of God on this matter.

1. “. . . properly signifies *renovations* ; because the temple, which had been polluted, was again consecrated by the command of Judas Maccabaeus; and at that time it was enacted that the day of the new *dedication* or *consecration* should be celebrated every year as a festival, that the people might recall to remembrance the grace of God, which had put an end to the tyranny of Antiochus.” JOHN CALVIN

2. “ *The feast of the dedication* Literally, the feast of the renewing, or of the renovation. This feast was instituted by Judas Maccabaeus, in the year 164 B.C. The temple and city were taken by Antiochus Epiphanes in the year 167 B.C.” ALBERT BARNES

3. “ *The feast of the dedication* — This was a feast instituted by Judas Maccabaeus, in commemoration of his purifying the temple after it had been defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes.” ADAM CLARKE

4. “We have here the time when this conference was: *It was at the feast of dedication, and it was winter*, a feast that was annually observed by consent, in remembrance of the dedication of a new altar and the purging of the temple, by Judas Maccabaeus, after the temple had been profaned and the altar defiled; we have the story of it at large in the history of the Maccabees (lib. 1, cap. 4); we have the prophecy of it, Daniel 8:13, 14.” MATTHEW HENRY

4. “. . . **it was ... the feast of the dedication** — celebrated rather more than *two months* after the feast of tabernacles, during which intermediate period our Lord seems to have remained in the neighborhood of Jerusalem. It was instituted by Jude Maccabaeus, to commemorate the purification of the temple from the profanations to which it had been subjected by Antiochus Epiphanes.” JAMIESON, FAUSSET, BROWN

5. “Now, the Feast of Dedication (the *enkainia*) was (celebrated) in Jerusalem. This feast is not elsewhere noticed in the New Testament. The account of its origin is found in 1 Macc. 4:36, etc.; 2 Macc. 10:1 — 8; Josephus, ‘Ant.’ 12:7. 7. And it was winter. It was held on the 25th of Chisleu, which, in A.D. 29, would correspond with the 19th of December, in commemoration of the “renewal,” reconsecration, of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus after the gross profanation of it by Antiochus Epiphanes.” PULPIT COMMENTARY

6. “. . . this was the feast of dedication, appointed by Judas Maccabaeus and his brethren, on account of the purging the temple, and renewing the altar, after the profanation of them by Antiochus; which feast lasted eight days, and began on the twenty fifth of the month Cisleu, which answers to part of our December.” JOHN GILL

Why Mention This?

It might appear quite pointless to mention all of this, seeing the information has come from uninspired resources. However, there is sound reason for this effort.

First, Daniel is being shown events that will take place during a time when there was no prophet, and in which no Scripture was written. There would be no Divine commentary made on the events when they happened. When the time of this prophecy came, the Jewish people also knew of this circumstance, and thus relied upon their priests and those with an understanding of Scripture. When Judas Maccabaeus instituted the “feast of the dedication,” I do not doubt he did so because of the prophecy of Daniel, although he himself was not aware of it. I will go so far as to say that if it was not for the words of Daniel, a fair appraisal of the desecration of Antiochus Epiphanes and the restoration of Judas Maccabaeus would not have been possible.

Beside this, when we have the Lord Jesus Himself honoring “the feast of the dedication,” no more need be said about its significance. In my judgment, Jesus was honoring the prophecy of Daniel as well as the diligence and faithfulness of Judas Maccabaeus. For centuries, people devoted to God have correlated the evils of Antiochus Epiphanes and the restoration of Judas Maccabaeus with the prophecy of Daniel.

While I consent this is not of itself sufficient reason to acknowledge the validity of this understanding, I also affirm it is

exceedingly difficult to explain this prophecy in any other way. I have found that those objecting to this view are generally trying to harmonize Daniel with theological positions that have their only basis in human opinion and analysis. Such theories should not drive our views of Scripture.

Understanding must be founded upon Divine affirmation, not human explanation. If God did not SAY it, it cannot be foundational!

DANIEL SEEKS FOR THE MEANING

“ 15 And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man.”

Some primary aspects of revelation are unfolded in this text. What is revealed by God is not always understood by those to whom it is revealed. Some sophists, content to remain on the surface of Scripture equate Divine revelation with personal understanding. Thus they imagine that having the text of Scripture, the Bible, is sufficient to have received from God. From that point on, they imagine, the human intellect is fully capable of processing the information. In this verse, we will see the utter folly of such an assumption.

I SOUGHT FOR THE MEANING

“And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning . . .” Other versions read, “I sought to understand it,” NASB “ trying to understand it,” NIV “I had a desire for the sense of it to be unfolded,” BBE and “I require understanding.” YLT

The Person of Daniel

Ponder of whom this text speaks. This is not a child, or a novice, or even a young man. This is man of seasoned years, an aged man by some peoples' definition. He has had considerable experience in the matter of dreams and visions. He was given a rather lengthy interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's first dream of the great image (2:31-45). He unfolded the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream of a great tree in the midst of the earth (4:20-27). He opened up the mysterious writing of the supernatural hand on the wall of Belshazzar's palace (5:24-28). Two years before this vision, he was given an extensive explanation of the four kingdoms previously introduced to Nebuchadnezzar (7:1-28).

If it is a matter of having credentials, consider those of Daniel.

- When young, he was “well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science” (Dan 1:4a).
- He was an expert in both language and literature NKJV (1:4b).
- He had skill in all learning and wisdom (1:17a).

- He had understanding in all visions and dreams (1:17b).
- From his very first exposure to the king and the best wisdom of Babylon, there was none like him (1:19).
- In all matters of wisdom and understanding, even when he was young, he was ten times better than the cultured Chaldeans' best (1:20).
- He was noted for having "an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts" (5:12).
- He was an expert in Scripture (9:2).

It is difficult to conceive of anyone being more qualified to figure things out! Stated in twentieth century jargon, he was a child prodigy, a genius, very gifted, a linguist, well and extensively educated, and a theologian – like a "PhD." In fact, an extremely educated person in our times, i.e., "Dr Hornblower," would probably be humbled before Daniel, even as a peer.

These days we hear a lot about Paul's extensive education (even though there is no evidence this is true). But we do not hear much about the educational qualifications of Daniel – to say nothing of his Divine tutelage.

Yet, when it came to this vision, all of Daniel's natural resources dried up. His expertise in language and literature were of no assistance to him. The context of other dreams and visions did not provide the key to understanding what he had been shown. Even though He knew Moses and the Prophets, they did not clarify what he had now been shown. If God did not give him the understanding of this vision, he would simply would never know it.

Under these circumstances, some would have abandoned any effort to know the meaning of the vision. They would have reasoned that it was beyond being comprehended. Thus they would remained content to talk about beasts, horns, and devastation. But Daniel was not such a spirit. He extended himself to understand the vision. If there was anything in him that would help, he sought for it. If there was anything available to him that would give assistance, he sought to find it.

It is because of this inquiring spirit that Daniel will be given more insight.

An Application

Although I have said this before, it should be said again. Many professing believers are miserably deficient in their spiritual understanding because they have never "sought for the meaning," or engaged in a diligent effort to understand the Scriptures. They do not have the spirit of the Psalmist who cried out, "Give me understanding" (Psa 119:34,73, 125, 144,169).

There is nothing that will compensate for this self-imposed spiritual ignorance. There is no professed Christian activity that magically propels the individual into a state that makes up for a lack of "spiritual understanding." The lack of such knowledge actually alienates one from God (Eph 4:18). Let it be clear that where "the love of the truth" is not possessed salvation is impossible, and damnation is sure. As it is written, ". . . because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess 2:10-12).

I realize this sounds extremely "negative," as some are wont to say. However, in the midst of a obvious waning of commitment to the Lord, souls must be stabbed awake with any ordained means that can be effectively wielded.

Daniel was given to know more because he sought to know more. He was given understanding because he engaged in a quest to obtain it. He saw further because he stretched his soul to do so. Understanding came to him from heaven because he “sought for the meaning” – the “meaning” of something God had shown him! O, that such a spirit was more prevalent in our time!

THERE STOOD BEFORE ME

“ . . . then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man.” Other versions read, “ suddenly there stood before me,” NKJV/NIV and “one who looked like a man.” NASB

The New Jerusalem Bible says this occurred while Daniel “gazed at the vision and tried to understand it.” Daniel sought, and now he will find. He asked, and now it will be given. He knocked, and now it shall be opened to him. “Suddenly,” as he peered into the vision, seeking to know what it meant, a figure appeared before him that resembled a man.

We will find in the next verse that this personality was none other than Gabriel, one of the premier angels of Scripture. I will reserve my remarks on Gabriel until the next lesson, when they will be more appropriate. However, it is in order to here comment briefly on the appearances of angels in human form, or in the “similitude of a man.”

Regarding their essential nature, angels are “spirits.” As it is written, “Who maketh His angels spirits ; His ministers flaming fire” (Psa 104:4). And again, “And of the angels he saith, Who maketh His angels spirits , and His ministers a flame of fire” (Heb 1:7). And again, “But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits , sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb 1:13-14). Also, angels cannot not “die” (Lk 20:36). Yet, they have appeared to men in the form of mortal men. Some of these instances are listed below.

- To Abraham as three men (Gen 18:2-3).
- To Hagar (Gen 16:7).
- To Lot as two men (Gen 19:1-10).
- To Jacob as a multitude (Gen 28:12).
- To Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:2).
- To all the children of Israel (Judges 2:1-4).
- To Balaam (Num 22:31).
- To Joshua (Josh 5:15).
- To Gideon (Judges 6:11-20).
- To Monoah and his wife, who more Samson (Judges 13:6, 16-20).
- David saw an angel at the threshing floor of Araunah (2 Sam 24:16-17).
- To Elijah saw one under the juniper tree (1 Kings 19:5).
- One appeared to Daniel in the lion’s den (Dan 6:22).
- An angel appeared t Zechariah the prophet (Zech 2:3; 4:1).
- To Joseph, the husband of Mary (Matt 1:20; 2:13; 2:19).
- To Mary, mother of Jesus (Lk 1:26).
- To Zacharias, father of John the Baptist (Lk 1:11).
- To the shepherds on the night of Jesus’ birth (Lk 2:9-14).
- To Jesus after his temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:11).
- To Jesus as He struggled in Gethsemane (Lk 22:43).
- To the women at the tomb (Matt 28:2-5; Mk 16:5-7; Lk 24:23).
- To Mary at the tomb (John 20:11-12).
- To the disciples at the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:10-11).
- To Peter and John when they were in prison (Acts 5:19-20).
- To Philip, commissioning him to go down to the desert (Acts 8:26).
- To Cornelius in a vision (Acts 10:3).
- To Peter in prison (Acts 12:7-11).
- To Paul on a ship (Acts 27:23).
- To John on Patmos (Rev 1:1).

Several of the above texts make a point of saying the angel was in the form, or likeness, of a man (Gen 18:2; 19:5,10,12,16; Judges 13:6; Ezek 1:5-10; Acts 10:30; Dan 8:15; 10:18; Acts 1:10).

The names of two of these angels have been revealed: Michael (Dan 10:13,21; 12:1; Jude 1:9; Rev 12:7) and Gabriel (Dan 8:16; 9:21; Lk 1:16,26). Both of these angels are mentioned by Daniel. Gabriel came to him, and Michael fought in order that he might receive God's message.

There are different kinds, or orders, of angels. They include seraphs (Isa 6:2), archangels (1 Thess 4:16), and cherubs (Ex 25:19; Ezek 10:2-9). Their ministries are vast, and their power far beyond that of men, for they "excel in strength" (Psa 103:20).

It is always a significant matter when angels appear to men. They are never sent on trivial missions, nor do they deal with mere novelties. Their messages are weighty, and are to be received in faith.

Thus heaven has dispatched an angel to Daniel in order to provide the understanding for which he seeks. What a marvelous circumstance, indeed! How precious it must have been to Daniel in Babylon, relatively alone.

CONCLUSION

We have been exposed to a heavenly assessment of earthly history. Here is a large portion of what the Britannica Encyclopedia says about Antiochus Epiphanes.

"Antiochus' hellenizing policies brought him into conflict with the prosperous Oriental temple organizations, and particularly with the Jews . Since Antiochus III's reign the Jews had enjoyed extensive autonomy under their high priest. They were divided into two parties, the orthodox Hasideans (Pious Ones) and a reform party that favoured Hellenism. For financial reasons Antiochus supported the reform party and, in return for a considerable sum, permitted the high priest, Jason, to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem and to introduce the Greek mode of educating young people. In 172, for an even bigger tribute, he appointed Menelaus in place of Jason. In 169, however, while Antiochus was campaigning in Egypt, Jason conquered Jerusalem—with the exception of the citadel—and murdered many adherents of his rival Menelaus. When Antiochus returned from Egypt in 167 he took Jerusalem by storm and enforced its Hellenization. The city forfeited its privileges and was permanently garrisoned by Syrian soldiers.

The revolt of Judas Maccabeus. The Greeks and those friendly toward them were united into the community of Antiochians; **the worship of Yahweh and all of the Jewish rites were forbidden on pain of death. In the Temple an altar to Zeus Olympios was erected, and sacrifices were to be made at the feet of an idol in the image of the King.** Against that desecration Judas Maccabeus, leader of the anti-Greek Jews, led the aroused Hasideans in a guerrilla war and several times defeated the generals Antiochus had commissioned to deal with the uprising. **Judas refused a partial amnesty, conquered Judaea with the exception of the Acra in Jerusalem, and in December 164 was able to tear down the altar of Zeus and reconsecrate the Temple.** Antiochus apparently had underestimated the strength of the Hasidean movement, which was behind the success in maintaining an independent Judaeian state for about a century. **The fighting spirit of the Jews was all the more impressive** because at the beginning of their rebellion in 166 Antiochus had just demonstrated his might to the world at Daphne, near Antioch, with a grand review of his army: 46,000 foot soldiers were on parade, among them a Macedonian phalanx of 20,000 men and 500 mercenaries equipped with Roman arms, followed by 8,500 horsemen and 306 armoured elephants." BRITANNICA 2000

How differently God speaks of those very events. What historians refer to as Antiochus' attempt to hellenize the Jews, God calls coming against His "pleasant land." What history describes as Antiochus returning to Jerusalem and taking it by force, enforcing its hellenization, God describes as the host, and sacrifice being "given" to him, as well as the ability to cast down the truth and practice and prosper. What history calls the tearing down of the altar of Zeus and the reconsecration of the temple, God calls the "cleansing of the sanctuary." What history casually refers to as the "fighting spirit of the Jews," God refers to as a Divine limitation of "2,300 days."

If God had not revealed these things to Daniel, God would not have been duly glorified in the events described. Men would have been cast upon their own feeble explanations to account for these things, and we would have nothing more than their words. Perhaps some would even have thought them too insignificant to even peruse.

These things have been recorded in order for us to learn from them. Here are some things that have occurred to me. Perhaps they will be the catalyst for some of your own personal observations .

- Those who neglect Divine privileges that have been vouchsafed to them will be judged for doing so.
- Truth that is neglected will be taken from men.
- God can cause enemies to ride over the heads of the unfaithful.
- Power given into the hands of the enemy is limited, and is only for an appointed time.
- Those who are zealous for the truth will be duly noted by the Lord, and their hearts satisfied.
- The Lord will not allow vast segments of time to remain uninterpreted, or without some Divine perspective being given.

The Prophecy of Daniel

AN INTERPRETATION GIVEN TO DANIEL

Lesson # 26

INTRODUCTION

Daniel has been shown a vision. It has been remarkably detailed, revealing an assault upon the people of God. The holy land would be attacked, the daily sacrifice violently taken away, the altar of sacrifice defiled with abomination, and the sanctuary plundered and cast down. The devastating desecration was appointed for 2,300 days. All of this was owing to the transgression of the people of God. The prophecy was weighty as well as intriguing, registering a strong impact upon the spirit of Daniel.

A PRINCIPLE TO BE SEEN

There is a spirit in this text that reveals a principle of revelation. It is that relevant futures always pertain to the people of God. The evil crusader of this vision came from the Grecian empire, and launched an initiative against the Lord's land, people, sacrifice, altar, and sanctuary. That is why special note is made of him. As a political entity, Antiochus Epiphanes was historically significant. He conquered the great nation of Egypt, occupying it in 169 B.C. He also launched an impressive effort to hellenize his kingdom "by founding and fostering Greek cities." The Britannica Encyclopedia 2002 says of him, "he had contributed to the building of the temple of Zeus in Athens and to the adornment of the theatre. He enlarged Antioch on the Orontes by adding a section to the city (named Epiphania after him). There he built an aqueduct, a council hall, a marketplace, and a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus. Babylon, which revered him as Soter (Liberator, or Savior) of Asia, was given a Greek colony that was granted freedom of the city. Another Epiphania was founded in Armenia. Ecbatana (in Persia) was also named Epiphania and became a Greek city. Many of these cities were granted the right to coin their own municipal currency. The mint of Antioch on the Persian Gulf served the trade along the sea route between India and the district at the mouth of the great Mesopotamian rivers." From the worldly point of view, his dealings with the Jews was a side issue, even though he suffered defeat at their hands. Yet, from heaven's point of view, all of his other endeavors and exploits were incidental, and unworthy of mention.

This is a consistent approach to the affairs of men in Scripture. The Divine spotlight is not placed upon earthly dignitaries unless they in some way impact upon the people of God. The Bible is never a mere history book, or commentary on social affairs. It is ever a record of the works of God, and His interventions in the affairs of men. Some examples of this principle are provided below.

- The lives of Abraham (1955 B.C. - 1780 B.C.) and Job (1950 B.C. ??) are given considerable emphasis in Scripture. During their lifetime the Sumerian Civilization (3500 B.C. - 1800 B.C.), the Middle Kingdom of Egypt (2000 B.C. - 1780 B.C.), the Babylonian Empire of Mesopotamia (2000 B.C. - 1531 B.C.), and the Hittites of Asia Minor (2000 B.C. - 1200 B.C.) were in existence. Though consistently given prominence in worldly history, they were not the object of Divine commentary.
- Hammurabi (1792 B.C. - 1750 B.C.) was a contemporary of Jacob (1795 B.C. - 1647 B.C.). Although significant in worldly history, Jacob is the prominent one in God's revelation.
- From 1730 B.C. to 1580 B.C. the Hyksos people ruled Egypt. They were a significant people in worldly history introducing the horse and the chariot, the compound bow, improved battle axes, and advanced fortification techniques. Yet during their outwardly impressive dominance, God chose to emphasize Joseph (1704 B.C. - 1594 B.C.).
- The Egyptian Empire extended from 1550 B.C. to 1085 B.C., during which such historical notables as Amenhotep I, Thutmose I, Thutmose II, and Hatshepsut, and others ruled. Yet, during this time, Moses (1529 B.C. - 1409 B.C.) is the man of whom God spoke. The events during this time of which God spoke were the exodus, Israel's entrance into Canaan, and the time of the Judges.
- The Assyrian Empire extended from 1200 B.C. to 612 B.C. Yet, during their impressive dominion God gave the record of the Judges and Kings of Jews.

- The Babylonian Empire extended from 626 B.C. to 538 B.C., yet its only significance in Scripture related to the Babylonian captivity in which Israel was chastened. During the time of their dominion God spoke about Jeremiah, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Joel, and Ezekiel.
- During the dominance of the Roman Empire (63 B.C. - 180 A.D.) the content of Divine commentary is found in the books of the Bible commonly called “the New Testament.” The entrance of the Savior into the world, His vicarious death, triumphant resurrection, and enthronement in glory are the focus of Divine commentary. Such notables as the Apostles, Stephen, Philip, Timothy, Luke, James, and others, are the people of whom we hear. And, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ has the spotlight of heaven upon it.

There is a remarkable consistency throughout Scripture of this approach. Men and kingdoms of this world only obtain any significance when they impact upon the people of God. Apart from that they are, at best, only incidental, and hardly worthy of mention.

The Implications of This Observation

It is one thing to make these observations, it is another thing to see their implications. The book of Daniel has been the object of much theological abuse. All manner of doctrines have been founded upon some of the very prophecies with which we are dealing. Not a few of these doctrines relate to the last times, and events that will come upon the world. Some take the position that many of these events – object of Divine commentary – will take place following the removal of the people of God from the earth.

While I do not wish to be contentious about the matter, there is something about this view that troubles me. God has never commented on the kingdoms, individuals, or affairs of this world unless they bore directly upon His people.

- The Pharaohs, for example, were of no significance until it came to Joseph, the offspring of Abraham, Moses, and the deliverance of the Jews.
- Nebuchadnezzar obtained significance only when God used him to chasten His people.
- Cyrus gained importance when God used him to initiate a return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of His house.
- Herod the Great came into Scriptural significance only when the Son of God was born.

- Herod Antipas is only mentioned because of his deed against John the Baptist, and his role in the death of Jesus.
- We are given information about Pilate only because he was involved in the atoning death of Christ.

Suffice it to say, it is completely out of order to weigh down the people of God with proclamations of a ruthless ruler of the future who is viewed strictly from a political and worldly point of view . God has never spoken in such a manner. God has had a special people in the earth since the days of Abraham. Yet, He has never sent a prophet to them, or addressed one inspired word to them, about mere political events, or men of the world. His word has always related to His affairs among His people.

Some choose to believe that this trend, however, changes with the advent of Christ. Now, through the books of Daniel and Revelation, they imagine, God tells us of worldly rulers without regard to their association with His people. Such a supposition suggests a dramatic departure from every syllable of revelation. Additionally, it represents God as becoming more general in His words since the enthronement of Jesus.

It will take a great deal more than human affirmation to establish such a conjecture. Those who point the saints of God to a time in the future when political rule becomes the most prominent thing, have not contributed one weightless mote of good to them. Whatever defense may be presented for such presentations, they do not blend with the spirit of revelation.

From beginning to end, the Substance of revelation is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said of the Scriptures, “they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). An angel from heaven revealed to John that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10). Of the thrust of the Prophet’s message, Peter said the Spirit in them “testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow” (1 Pet 1:11). We must not allow our approach to Daniel to rob us of this perspective, leaving us marveling at an earthly ruler. Whatever view one chooses to take of this passage, it must not be allowed to upstage the Messiah, or shine more light on His opponents than on Himself.

THE EXPOSITION OF THE VISION

Daniel has sought to understand the vision that has been shown to him. Now his desire will be granted from heaven. It is critical that we note the manner in which it is unfolded. There is some specificity, but it is not after a carnal order. Everything relates to the purpose of God and the coming of the Messiah. Those pillars of reason are at the heart of all Scripture. The text before us is preparatory for the consideration of the Messiah in chapter nine. Were it not for Him, this revelation would not have been given. All Scripture finds its meaning and value in Jesus.

MAKE THIS MAN UNDERSTAND

“ 8:16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.”

A vision has been shown to Daniel. It was given to him in the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar. In the vision, he was transported to the center of Persian power, in the palace at Shushan, in the province of Elam. In his vision, he was by the river of Ulai. By way of review, the following is a brief summation of that vision (8:1-14).

- He saw a ram on the bank of the river.
- The ram had two high horns.
- One of the ram's horns grew higher than the other, coming up last.
- The ram forced its way toward the West, North, and South.
- None could deliver out of its hand.
- The ram did whatever it wanted.
- A he goat came from the West.
- He covered the earth swiftly, not touching the ground.
- The he goat had a notable horn between its eyes.
- The he goat approached the ram, running to him in the fury of its power.
- He was moved with bitterness against the ram.
- He struck the ram, breaking its two horns.

- The ram lost all power and was trampled into the ground.
- No one could deliver the ram from the fury of the he goat.
- When the he goat was at the zenith of its power, its notable horn was broken.
- Four notable horns came in the place of the broken horn.
- Out of one of the four horns grew a little horn.
- The little horn grew great, moving toward the South and the East.
- In its power, the horn came against God's "pleasant land."
- It grew great, even to the host of heaven.
- It cast down some of the host and stars, trampling them.
- It magnified itself against the Prince of the host.
- It took away the daily sacrifice.
- It cast down the place of God's sanctuary.
- A host was given to him, as well as the daily sacrifice.
- It was given such power because of transgression.
- It cast the truth to the ground.
- It did its own will and prospered.
- Daniel heard one saint speaking.
- Daniel heard another saint ask the speaking saint how long the daily sacrifice would cease, the transgression of desolation continue, and the sanctuary and host be trodden under foot.

- Daniel is told these circumstances would continue for 2,300 days.
- Following those 2,300 days, the sanctuary would be cleansed.

There are no less than thirty-one details! It is no wonder that Daniel “sought for the meaning” of the vision! We are not told how long Daniel “sought for the meaning.” However, while he was in the process of considering the vision and seeking for its meaning, there stood in front of him “one who looked like a man.” NIV

This was a heavenly personality who appeared in the form of a man, thereby making his appearance less disruptive to Daniel. The word this messenger came to give must not be overshadowed by his glorious appearance, for angels have a supernal glory of their own (Matt 16:27). This being is not intended to be studied, viewed with awe, or become the subject of speculation. He comes with a message.

A MAN’S VOICE

“And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai . . .” Once again, there is an accommodation to frailty of the human constitution. It was a “man’s voice” Daniel heard, but it did not come from a man. The things that will be made known to Daniel are beyond the discovery of men. They must be brought to men, or else they will never comprehend them. The “voice of a man,” therefore, is a description of the manner in which God made this known to Daniel. It was an instance of heaven accommodating itself to human frailty.

Daniel has seen a ram on one side of the river Ulai, and a he goat on the other side. But this voice comes from neither side. It is “between the banks of Ulai.” It is not a voice that sides with the ram or the he goat, but speaks for the One who rules them both. This voice is similar to the one seen by Joshua when they came against Jericho. One with the appearance of a man stood before Joshua with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua asked, “Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” The one standing before Joshua deferred to be identified with either one of them. He simply answered, “Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come” (Josh 5:14). He had not come to be an arbiter between men, but to take control. He was an expression of the heavens that do rule.

Thus the one Daniel sees, as well as the voice he hears, is coming from the heavenly headquarters from which all of the affairs of men are governed. The words that follow are not spoken to Daniel, but to the figure standing before him.

GABRIEL

“ . . . which called, and said, Gabriel.” Now, for the first time, we find that this person who appeared as a man was actually the angel Gabriel. Further, this is the first mentioning of Gabriel in Scripture. This confirms to us the magnitude of the revelation that is being made known to Daniel. It

has brought the involvement of angelic personages.

The angel Gabriel is mentioned four times in Scripture. Two of them are in the book of Daniel.

- “And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.” (Dan 8:16)
- “Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.” (Dan 9:21)
- “And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings.” (Luke 1:19)
- “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.” (Luke 1:26-27)

We learn several things from these four references.

- That Gabriel is, in fact, an angel: “the angel Gabriel.”
- That he has understanding concerning the affairs of men: “I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation” (Dan 8:19).
- He has power to quicken men: “he touched me, and set me upright” (Dan 8:18).
- That he is dispatched quickly, coming swiftly from heaven to earth: “being caused to fly swiftly” (Dan 9:21).
- That he can give “skill and understanding” (Dan 9:22).
- That he stands in the presence of God: “I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God” (Luke 1:19).
- That he has been sent by God to specific individuals who are favored by God: “I am come to show thee; for thou (Daniel) art greatly beloved” (Dan 9:23); “Gabriel was sent from God . . . to a virgin . . . Mary . . . and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored” (Lk 1:26-27).

Extensive messages have been delivered by Gabriel: Daniel 8:17-26; 9:22-27; Luke 1:13-17,19-20; 1:28, 30-33,35-37.

The fact that Gabriel is dispatched to deliver the meaning of the vision to Daniel suggests the importance of that message. It also indicates that it is related to the Lord's Christ in some way, as the other three messages Gabriel delivered particularly had to do with the Messiah.

MAKE HIM UNDERSTAND

“ . . . make this man to understand the vision.” Other versions read, “ give this man understanding,” NASB “ tell this man the meaning,” NIV “ help this man understand,” NRSV “make the vision clear ,” BBE and “ cause this one to understand.” YLT

Immediately we see that heavenly personalities are more informed than those upon earth – particularly regarding the working of the Lord in the earth. It is true, the angels desire to probe the Gospel, for it pertains exclusively to men, unveiling aspects of God's character no angel has ever experienced (1 Pet 1:12). What is apparent to them are mysteries unto men until they are explained. It is no wonder the Scriptures speak of profound understanding as something likened to “the wisdom of an angel” (2 Sam 14:20).

This wisdom, however, is not merely a capacity resident in the angels, although that capacity is there. Rather, their wisdom is the result of being “in the presence of the Lord,” a position Gabriel acknowledged he occupied (Lk 1:19).

True wisdom is directly proportionate to ones proximity to the Lord, and availing oneself of that proximity. Satan was once close to the throne, no less than “the anointed cherub,” who was “upon the holy mountain of God” (Ezek 28:14). However, he chose to be “lifted up” because of his beauty, corrupting his wisdom “by reason” of his “brightness.” Therefore he was cast from his ancient habitation. Therefore, although Satan has an illustrious past, he is never employed to open the things of God to the people of God. Both his knowledge and his wisdom have been corrupted.

But it is not so with Gabriel. He is a chief among the “holy angels,” and is not among those who “kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation” (Jude 1:6). He is capable of making Daniel understand the vision – of bringing the understanding of it within Daniel's reach.

David knew that it is within both God's power and will to make mortals understand. That is why he prayed, “Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works” (Psa 119:27). Isaiah asked, “Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts” (Isa 28:9). That is, God

causes those who are mature in spirit – those who have understanding – to “understand doctrine.” While this contradicts carnal reasoning, it perfectly coincides with a revelation previously given to Daniel: “He giveth wisdom unto the wise , and knowledge to them that know understanding ” (Dan 2:21).

Notice that Gabriel does not move upon a word from Daniel. Angels are not subject to men, notwithstanding some of the contemporary nonsense about saints commanding angels. The “man’s voice” Daniel heard speaking to Gabriel did not come from a man, but from heaven. It was like a “man’s voice” for Daniel’s sake, not that of Gabriel. Daniel had sought for understanding. It was sent to him from heaven, and brought by the angel Gabriel. However, Gabriel will deliver the message upon a word from heaven. He now has the word, and the explanation is forthcoming, for he will obey immediately.

ANGELIC REVELATIONS

God has frequently employed angels to deliver key messages to men, and to open Divine determinations that were hidden to men. Some of them involved extensive directions and explanations.

- Unveiled Abraham’s future when he was set to offer up Isaac as he was commanded (Gen 22:11-18).
- Spoke to Hagar, telling her she was with child, to call him “Ishmael” when he was born, that he would be a “wild man,” would be “against every man” (Gen 16:7-12).
- Revealed the destruction of Sodom to Lot, told him he must leave the city, and negotiated him going to a nearby city for safety (Gen 19:1-22).
- Instructed Gideon on his role in delivering Israel from the Midianites in an extended revelation (Judges 6:11-23).
- Revealed the birth of Samson to Manoah and his wife, telling them what to name him, how to raise him, and that he would do (Judges 13:6–20).
- Instructed Zechariah concerning the future in most remarkable ways. No less than ten times Zechariah refers to “the angel that talked with me” (Zech 1:9-19; 2:3-13; 3:1-6; 4:1-7; 5:5-10; 6:4-8).
- Revealed to Joseph that he should take Mary to be his wife, that she would have the Son of God, and that he should call His name Jesus, for He would save His people from their sins (Matt 1:20-21).
- Provided Mary, the mother of our Lord, with extensive information concerning His birth and glorious reign (Luke 1:26-38).

- Made known the birth and ministry of John the Baptist to Zecharias (Luke 1:11-20).
- Revealed the birth of Jesus to certain shepherds, explaining who He was, the extent of the news concerning Him, and how to recognize Him (Luke 2:8-14).
- Made known to the women who came to the tomb that Jesus was not there, that He had risen, and to tell His disciples, and that Jesus would meet them in Galilee (Matt 28:5-7).
- At Christ's ascension told the disciples Jesus would come again, just as they had seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:10-11).
- Appeared to Cornelius, telling him his prayers had been heard in heaven, and giving detailed instructions on what he should do to hear words whereby he and his house could be saved (Acts 10:3-6).
- Made known to John the message contained in the book of Revelation (Rev 1:1).

These are only representative of a great number of angelic messages recorded in Scripture. They confirm to us that heavenly involvements are intelligent ones, with purpose and intent. They also reveal the desire of the Lord to communicate His will to men, making them privy to His will.

Heavenly Words Are Clear

There are those who imagine that a cloud of mystery, strange feelings, and unintelligible utterances are evidences of heavenly activity. However, such postulates are exceedingly difficult to support. In Scripture, every time heaven interfaces with men for the purpose of blessing, there is always some degree of understanding. It is true that Paul was once caught up into the third heaven, hearing "unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor 12:4). These were words that could not be expressed in human language. The message Paul heard was for him personally, and apparently brought sustaining grace to him for the trials that awaited him. The words were clear to him, therefore, but he could not communicate them to others. Those who would make such an experience common among the saints, or a standard for those in the body of Christ, do greatly err. This occurred to Paul one time, and he humbly recalls it fourteen years afterward.

For those with a penchant for speaking in "unknown tongues," there is nothing in God's word that suggests such a language is unintelligible. "Unknown" is not a synonym for unintelligent, nor does it speak of something that cannot be known. It is unknown to the hearer, not the speaker. That is why those speaking in tongues are told to pray they can interpret their word to others (1 Cor 14:13-17). A word from them to others that cannot be understood is of no profit. Why should it be thought such a word could be profitable to them?

A message from God that cannot be understood is no message at all. Such a message is like the

one Jesus gave to Saul on the road to Damascus, which message those with him could not understand, even though they heard sounds (Acts 9:7; 22:9). God forbid that anyone in the body of Christ should be like those who accompanied Saul.

As a matter of passing interest, Paul spoke of “the tongues of men and angels ” (1 Cor 13:1). However, in every single instance where angels communicated with men, they spoke in the language of men. This confirms the desire of the Lord for men to acquire an understanding of His purposes.

I WAS AFRAID

“ 17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.”

Daniel has seen Gabriel; standing before him, but there was a distance between him and this mighty angel. That distance was necessitated by man’s fallen condition, and it can only be bridged by a Divine initiative. When fallen man is brought close to heavenly influences, an acute awareness of the enmity that accompanies that fallen condition is realized.

I WAS AFRAID AND FELL ON MY FACE

“So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face . . . ” One can only imagine the fear that must have gripped Daniel’s heart as the mighty angel Gabriel drew close to him. When David saw an angel with a drawn sword, he was “afraid” (2 Chron 21:30). When Gideon saw an angel, he thought he was going to die (Judges 6:22-23). When Manoah and his wife (the parents of Samson) saw an angel of the Lord, Manoah said to his wife, “We shall surely die” (Judges 13:22). Upon the sight of an angel, even the animal carrying Balaam refused to approach to him, turning side, going into a wall, and finally falling down (Gen 22:23,25,27). When Balaam saw the angel, he “fell flat on his face” (Num 22:31). When David and the elders of Israel “saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and heaven,” they all “fell on their faces” (1 Chron 21:16). Upon beholding an angel, Zecharias “was troubled, and fear fell upon him” (Lk 1:11). When the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds on the night of Jesus’ birth, they were “sore afraid” (Lk 2:9). When an angel descended upon the tomb from which Jesus had risen, “for fear of him, the keepers did shake, and became as dead men” (Matt 28:2). When Cornelius saw an angel “he was afraid” (Acts 10:4).

This fear was induced by the glory of the angels of reference, which so contrasted with the flesh of men. In the many instances where men are not said to have feared at the sight of an angel, that glory was subdued by the angel appearing as a man, or by allaying the fears of the people by saying “fear not.”

Also, following the inauguration of the New Covenant, when men were reconciled to God, such fears were not as common, for men had been reconciled to God through Christ Jesus.

I . . . Fell Upon My Face

We are living in a time and place when pride is so dominant that such expressions sound strange. That strangeness also indicates how far this generation is from the Lord. When Ezekiel saw “the glory of the Lord,” he also said, “I fell on my face” (Ezek 3:23). When God “talked” with Abram, he “fell on his face” (Gen 17:3). When an angel who was “captain of the Lord’s host” appeared to Joshua, he also “fell on his face” (Josh 5:14). When a fire from heaven came down and consumed the sacrifice on the altar of burnt offerings, the people saw it and “fell on their faces” (Lev 9:24). The same thing happened when fire fell from heaven consuming Elijah’s sacrifice (1 Kgs 18:39). Manoah and his wife also did the same at the sight of an angel (Judges 13:20).

Here was a man “greatly beloved” of the Lord, and yet when Gabriel came from the presence of the Lord and approached him, he was afraid and fell upon his face. It certainly was not because Daniel was in a state of rebellion, or had not been faithful, or had forgotten the Lord. Rather, such a vast gulf between God and man has been created by sin that heavenly confrontations tend to induce fear .

UNDERSTAND, O SON OF MAN

“ . . . but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man . . . ” The angel quickly points out the frailty of humanity: “O son of man.” Here, that phrase literally means “son of Adam,” for the word used for “man” is the Hebrew word “Adam” (aw-dawm). It is also translated “man” in Genesis 1:26,27; 2:5,7,8,15,16,18,22,25; 3:12,22,24; 5:1; 6:3,5,6,7; 7:21,23;9:5,6; 16:12, etc. In fact, “man” is translated from the Hebrew word “aw-dawm” no less than 579 times from Genesis through Malachi. Humanity is thus addressed as “Adam” because “from one man ” God “made every nation of men” NIV (Acts 17:26). By saying “son of man,” therefore, Gabriel was referring to Daniel’s humanness, or descent from Adam.

How fragile men must appear to the holy angels! The glory in which they regularly bask causes flesh to fear and quake. However, the angel is gentle with Daniel, for he has been sent and commissioned to bring understanding to him. Therefore, he immediately highlights his mission – to give understanding, and not to induce fear.

“The Time of the End”

“ . . . for at the time of the end shall be the vision.” Other versions read, “the vision refers to the time of the end,” NKJV “the vision belongeth to the time of the end,” ASV “the vision pertains to the time of the end,” NASB “the vision concerns the time of the end,” NIV “the vision is for the time of the end,” NRSV “the vision has to do with the time of the end,” BBE and “the vision is for an appointed time.” Septuagint

There are at least two things emphasized in the expression “time of the end.”

First , the vision refers to the time of the conclusion of the desolation that would be inflicted by Antiochus Epiphanes – the time when the temple would be “cleansed.” “The end” is not the end of time, but the end of the judgment that came “because of transgression.” This would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, who would not enter the world while the vile desolation was still in place.

Second , and of particular emphasis, this refers to the Divine appointment of “the end” of the desolation. The Septuagint version shows this in its translation of the verse: “the vision is for an appointed time.” We are not, however, left to conjecture on this matter, nor are we dependent upon the various translations of the verse. The text itself will deliver the meaning to us, without the aid of the linguist.

In his elaboration of the vision, Gabriel will make this precise point in verse nineteen. “And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be. ” The end refers to the indignation.

HE TOUCHED ME

“ 18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.” The sight of Gabriel, together with his words, was too much for the flesh. The natural part of Daniel’s person lost its mobility in the presence of the heavenly messenger. Here is another confirmation that “flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 15:50). The more prominent the Spirit becomes to the individual, the more insignificant and unprofitable the flesh becomes. Daniel now testifies how his natural weakness was resolved by Gabriel. This was done in order that he might take hold of the message brought to him. The flesh was, indeed, “weak,” but it would not rob Daniel of the meaning that he sought. Gabriel will come to his aid, a true minister of an heir of salvation

I WAS IN A DEEP SLEEP

“Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground . . . ” Other versions read, “I fell into a deep sleep,” ASV “ went into a deep sleep,” BBE “I fell into a trance , face toward the ground,” NRSV “I went into a deep stupor,” DARBY and “I fainted .” NJB

This is an elaboration of the statement, “I was afraid, and fell upon my face.” The idea is that his strength was utterly taken away from him. His consciousness of the presence of Gabriel and his words were in his spirit, not his flesh, which was stupefied by the confrontation. It appears as though he was oblivious to everything about him, his flesh being overcome with the events at hand. Thus some versions read that he was in “a trance,” or “fainted.”

Daniel had this same reaction, during the third year of Cyrus king of Persia. Then, when he heard the voice of words coming from an angelic being, he again “was in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground” (10:9). It is sufficient to say at this point that the magnitude of the vision coupled with the presence of Gabriel the angel was more than the human constitution of Daniel could bear. Other Scriptural incidents that are similar include the following, confirming this is not an unusual response.

- ABRAM. “And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him” (Gen 15:12).
- JOB. “Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up” (Job 4:12-15).
- GIDEON. “And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O LORD God! for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die” (Judges 6:22-23).
- ZECHARIAS. “And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him” (Luke 1:11-12).

HE TOUCHED ME

“ . . . but he touched me, and set me upright.” Other versions reach, “he touched me, and stood me upright,” NKJV “he touched me and made me stand upright,” NASB “he touched me and raised me to my feet,” NIV “he touched me and set me on my feet,” NRSV “he touched me, he put me on my feet where I had been ,” BBE and “he touched me, and set me up where I had stood.” DARBY

For some people, being caused to faint, fall into a deep sleep, or brought to lie flat on their face, would be sufficient to be classified a blessing. But for men to be left in such a posture is preferred neither by holy men nor angels.

- When a “deep sleep” fell upon Abram , the Lord spoke to him, detailing the future of the nation that

would come from him (Gen 15:10-16).

- When Balaam fell into a trance, he received insight into the favored status of Israel (Num 24:4-6).
- When Daniel twice fell into a deep sleep, messages were given to him (Dan 8:17-27; 10:9-21).
- When Peter fell into a trance, he was tutored by the Lord concerning the acceptance of the Gentiles (Acts 10:10-16). Immediately following that, the Spirit directed him to go to the house of Cornelius (Acts 11:5-12).
- When Saul of Tarsus was struck down, Jesus delivered a message to him (Acts 9:4-6).
- When Paul fell into a trance while he was praying, the Lord instructed him to leave Jerusalem and go to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21).
- When John fell as a dead man before the glorified Christ, Jesus identified Himself and delivered a commission to John (Rev 1:17-20).

Whatever may be said of such experiences, they are certainly not an end of themselves. The blessing, revelation, and direction of the Almighty are to be attended by alertness and attentiveness on the part of the one being addressed.

Thus Gabriel simply touches Daniel, causing him to raise a listening posture. He has been commissioned to cause Daniel to understand the vision he has seen, and he must have Daniel's attention to do so.

We have some indication here of the superiority of angels, and of their ability to do miraculous things. The Scriptures inform us that they "excel in strength" (Psa 103:20). Their power is most significant. What marvelous things they have done in their ministrations to the heirs of salvation!

- An angel led Israel out of Egypt (Num 20:16; Judges 2:1).
- Two angels destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:1,13,15-22).
- An angel caused fire to come out of a rock consuming some flesh and unleavened cakes (Judges 6:20-21).
- An angel prepared a miraculous meal for Elijah, a meal that strengthened him for forty days (1 Kgs

19:7-8). To prepare him for the meal, the angel simply “touched” Elijah, instantly raising him from a deep sleep (1Kgs 19:5).

- One angel killed an Assyrian army of 185,000 (2 Kgs 19:35).

It is obvious that angels have been Divinely equipped for their ministry. They are fully adequate for every mission on which they are sent. Of course, it is God’s manner to do such things – even among the sons of men. Now Gabriel prepares Daniel for the explanation of his troubling vision. He will tenderly assure him of the sure outcome of his appearance, frightening though it may be.

I WILL MAKE THEE KNOW

“ 19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.”

Gabriel has been told to cause Daniel to understand the vision, and he immediately sets out to do precisely that. This is the nature of angels, who are described in these words. “Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire” (Psa 104:4) – that is, they come quickly, and fulfill their missions effectively. They are also said to “fly swiftly” (Dan 9:21), doing the will of the Lord instantly. It is the Lord’s desire that such responses be found among the sons of men. That is one of the reasons Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Mat 6:10).

MAKE THEE KNOW

“And he said, Behold, I will make thee know . . .” Other versions read, “I am making known to you,” NKJV “I am going to let you know,” NASB “I am going to tell you ,” NIV and “I am causing thee to know.” YLT

Note the confidence with which the angel Gabriel speaks. He has a willing and seeking spirit in Daniel, and a commission from the God who does whatever He pleases in heaven and upon earth (Psa 135:6). The meeting of those two circumstances is what guarantees Daniel will understand.

We should be able to infer from this some valuable lessons for ourselves. Namely, that when we are sure of our standing with the Lord, and are persuaded of His commission, we will obtain much confidence to execute that mission. These are matters that cannot be learned by rote or routine. They are experienced in the process of the fellowship of Christ, into which we have been “called” (1 Cor 1:9).

THE LAST END OF THE INDIGNATION

“ . . . what shall be in the last end of the indignation . . . ” Other versions read, “the latter time of the indignation,” NKJV “at the final period of the indignation,” NASB “what will happen later in the time of wrath,” NIV “what will take place later in the period of wrath,” NRSV and “what will happen when wrath is at an end.” TNK

The idea here is that Gabriel will unveil what is going to happen later, when the wrath of God is poured out because of Israel’s transgression. He will tell Daniel the outcome of the indignation, or wrath, as well as some of the details of the wrath itself.

I want to again emphasize that this wrath was owing to the lethargy and disinterest that had developed in Israel. The book of Malachi, as previous pointed out, details the reprehensible state of the people. As Haggai pointed out, the people had turned their interests to their own houses, and allowed the house of God to be neglected. “Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?” (Hag 1:4). Haggai prophesied a little less than one hundred years after Daniel, and around three hundred and fifty years before the coming wrath executed through Antiochus Ephiphanes. Thus, Daniel is being told of specific events that will take place well over four hundred year after his ministry would close.

As Daniel will be told in the ninth chapter, these events were leading up to the coming of the Messiah into the world, and His death for the sins of humanity. It was necessary to deliver a harsh wake-up call to the Jews to arouse within them a longing and expectation for the coming Savior. This would be accomplished through a most severe chastening.

THE TIME APPOINTED

“ . . . for at the time appointed the end shall be.” Other versions read, “for it pertains to the appointed time of the end,” NASB “the vision concerns the appointed time of the end,” NIV “it refers to the appointed time of the end,” NRSV “for it has to do with the fixed time of the end,” BBE “for at the set time the end shall be,” DARBY and “or the vision is yet for an appointed time.” Septuagint

Following the Babylonian captivity, and when the people began to return to their land, they were spiritually obtuse, neglecting God’s Word and actually becoming spiritually stupid. In the time of Ezra, intermarriage with the heathen was common, which God had strictly forbade (Ezra 10). In the time of Nehemiah, the people had lost their acquaintance with the Word, which was awakened by once again reading it to the people (Neh 8). Also, many of them could no longer speak “the language of the Jews” (Neh 13:21-24).

During the days prior to the “indignation” wrought by Antiochus Epiphanes, God chastened the lethargic Jews. Through Haggai the Lord reminded the people, “I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD” (Hag 2:17). Zechariah also spoke of the condition of the people. “But they refused to hearken, and pulled away

the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech 7:11-13).

However, all of the chastening up to Antiochus Epiphanes was but a prelude to the wrath that would be poured out upon the people. There was a time Divinely appointed that would bring unprecedented wrath upon the people. Notwithstanding, that “indignation” would have an appointed conclusion, or end. Already Daniel has overheard the appointed duration to be 2,300 days (8:14). Now Gabriel will elaborate on the matters related to this time. He will be very specific in his explanation.

CONFIRMING THE KINGDOMS INVOLVED

“ 20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. 22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.”

I want to reiterate that the significance of this vision is underscored by how the Lord speaks about it. Gabriel is going to reveal the kingdoms involved are precisely the same as were revealed in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the great image, and Daniel’s vision of the four beasts rising out of the sea. In this vision, the focus is placed upon the second and third kingdoms – the Medes and the Persians, and the Grecians. Again, these were revealed to Nebuchadnezzar as a chest and arms of silver, and a belly and thighs of brass (2:32). In that vision, the Medes and the Persians were described as a kingdom “inferior” to Babylon, yet which would replace it (2:39). Nebuchadnezzar’s vision viewed the kingdoms from the standpoint of their glory, or their appearance.

A specific message was given to Belshazzar that said his kingdom would be divided and “given to the Medes and the Persians” (5:28). Nothing concerning the Grecian kingdom was made known to Belshazzar.

The kingdom of the Medes and Persians was depicted as a “bear” in Daniel’s first vision. It raised itself up on one side, signifying the prominence of the Persians (7:5). The Grecian kingdom was pictured as a leopard with four wings of a fowl upon its back, and four heads. In this vision the kingdoms were viewed from the standpoint of the power and ruthlessness.

Now Daniel has seen a vision that shows the Medes and the Persians as a ram, and the Grecians as a he goat. This vision emphasizes the beastly nature of the kingdoms.

In all of the visions, the kingdoms are totally unlike the kingdom of God. They gloried in appearance, strength, and the ability to subdue others. That is the nature of worldly kingdoms.

THE KINGS OF MEDIA AND PERSIA

“The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia . . .”

The very kingdom described in terms of valuable silver, and later as ruthless bear, is now likened to a butting ram, forcefully pushing its way into the territory of others, and taking it unto himself.

What God Is Doing

I have in my mind what I believe the Lord is doing here. Over a period of several years, and with the involvement of the children of Israel, the Lord is actually drawing attention to His people – preparing the world for the coming of the Messiah. It is true, Israel did not appear to be favored of God in this period of time. In fact, they were heavily oppressed, and were the tail and not the head (Deut 28:13). Still, for the beauty of their land and its rich resources, great worldly empires fastened their eyes upon it, and thought to bring it under their dominion. Moses said of the land, “A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass” (Deu 8:9).

The circumstances that found Babylonia, the Medes and the Persians, the Grecians, and even the Romans, desiring the “pleasant land,” were actually God getting their attention for the observation of still greater things.

Keep in mind that the Babylonian kingdom and that of the Medes and Persians were both responsible for proclaiming the name of God throughout the entire world (Dan 4:1-3; 6:25-27; 2 Chron 36:23).

Greece will also play a valuable role in the Divine economy – and that by purpose and appointment. What Alexander the Great and Antiochus Epiphanes thought was hellenizing the world, was actually the development of a single language through which the Gospel would be promulgated throughout the whole world.

THE KING OF GRECIA

“And the rough goat is the king of Grecia . . .” Other versions read, “the kingdom of Greece.” NKJV/NASB

In saying “the king of Grecia,” Gabriel does not mean there was only one king over Greece. He is using the word “king” in the sense of a dynasty, or succession of rulers. This seems to be clear by the reference to the “first king” in the following verse.

THE FIRST KING

“ . . . and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king . . . ” The first king to consolidate the kingdom of Greece was Alexander the Great. He is the “great horn between his eyes.”

Technically, Alexander was not first king. His father Philip was king before him. However Alexander was the first king of the Grecian monarchy. The vision given to Daniel concerns the mature Grecian empire, and not the time of its early development.

BROKEN AND REPLACED

“Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation , but not in his power. ”

As already established in lesson twenty-four, these “four kingdoms” were Egypt (ruled by Ptolemy), Asia (ruled by Lysimachus), Macedonia (ruled by Cassander), and Syria (ruled by Seleucus), into which the Grecian monarchy was divided after the death of Alexander. However, none of these kings wielded the power and influence of Alexander the Great: i.e., “not in his power.”

It is once again worthy of note that the great horn was simply “broken,” thereby falling from power. Divine judgment brought him down. From an historical point of view, Alexander died in a bed after eating some form of defiled food. However, what actually happened was that the Mighty God “removed” Him, which is His prerogative alone (Dan 2:21).

TRANSGRESSIONS COME TO THE FULL

“ 23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.”

Earlier, Daniel had witnessed a “little horn” grow out of one of four horns that replaced the single notable horn of the he goat. Now Gabriel gives a further description of this horn.

Although Alexander had more significance politically and from a worldly point of view, this king is more prominent in the working of God. He is going to administer God’s wrath upon His people for their transgressions which they willingly committed against Him. He also is going to come against “the pleasant land” and defile the sanctuary of God.

THE LATTER TIME OF THEIR KINGDOM

Rather than saying this ruler sprang from one of the four kings that replaced Alexander, Gabriel says he would stand up “in the latter time” of their kingdom, or toward the close of the Grecian dynasty. He did actually come from the Selucian portion of the kingdom. However, a different perspective is presented here. The complete demise of the Grecian empire will follow the work of this despot. Too, this provides a sort of time line that will enable those who trust God to identify what is really taking place.

TRANSGRESSIONS COME TO FULNESS

“And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full . . .” Other versions read, “when the transgressors have reached their fulness,” NKJV “when the transgressors have run their course,” NASB “when rebels have become completely wicked,” NIV “when the transgressions have reached their full measure,” NRSV “when their evil doings have become complete,” BBE and “when the transgressors have reached their full limit.” ESV

“The transgressions” of reference are those of the Jews, which waxed worse and worse. The concept of transgression or transgressions coming to their fulness is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. It is a condition that, on the one hand, emphasizes God’s longsuffering. On the other, it reveals the dreadful tendency of sin to increase in both magnitude and frequency.

- **THE AMORITES.** In making covenant with Abraham, the Lord told him his offspring would come out of Egypt “with great substance.” After four generations, they would come again to the promised land, where Abraham was when receiving this promise. “But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full” (Gen 15:16). Four generations must pass before the land could be occupied, because the “iniquity of the Amorites” had not yet reached its fulness. That is, God would not expel them from the land until their sin was of sufficient greatness to forbid them to live there any longer . In this case, a generation would be around one hundred years. Caleb, for example, was the fourth generation from Judah. Moses and

Aaron were the fourth generation from Levi. At the conclusion of those four generations, the iniquity of the Amorites would justify them being expelled from the land. It would then be given to Israel.

- **JERUSALEM.** In Jesus' day, the Jews, and particularly Jerusalem, were dominated by sin. That sin would reach its apex in the rejection of the Lord Jesus Himself. In addressing the matter of their sin, our Lord spoke in most arresting words. "Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers" (Mat 23:31-32). The nation was holding, as it was, a cup in which iniquity was being poured. When sin reached its brim, the nation would be judged, as Jesus foretold (Lk 19:43-44).
- **THE JEWS.** Paul also spoke of the sins of the Jews, how in his day they were forbidding the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles "that they might be saved." By so doing, they were filling up their sins. "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins always: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (1 Thess 2:16).

In this expression we receive some insight into the Divine nature. While "The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy," that characteristic can be so tested as to come to an end. It abruptly terminated in the days of Noah, when God finally cease to strive with men (Gen 6:3). It was then that another aspect of His nature was revealed: "and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" (Num 14:18). It is no wonder we are solemnly told, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt 4:7). This was Israel's sin in the wilderness, when, the Lord said they tempted Him "these ten times, and have not hearkened unto My voice" (Num 14:22). Their persistence in rebellion brought judgment down upon them.

Thus Daniel is told of another time, some few centuries after him, when they would once again fill iniquity's cup and incur the fierce judgment of the Almighty God.

An Application

In our day, this Divine trait has nearly been removed from the mind of the people. God is simply not seen to be this way, which greatly compounds the dilemma in which men find themselves. Sin is being compounded in our own nation, and even within the church itself. The cup of iniquity is gradually filling up. Even now it seems to be splashing over the brim of Divine tolerance.

There is a sore need in our day for powerful preachers who can set the true God before the people, calling them to awake before it is too late. There simply is too much going on that God has said he hates, and which will, if not abandoned, call forth His judgment.

A FIERCE KING

" . . . a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up." Other

versions read, “Having fierce features, Who understands sinister schemes,” NKJV “Insolent and skilled in intrigue,” NASB “a master of intrigue, will arise,” NIV “skilled in intrigue,” NRSV and “ingenious minded man.” NJB

This is Gabriel’s explanation of what Daniel saw – “out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land” (Dan 8:9-10).

A “king of fierce countenance,” is one who is stern and severe. He would be insolent and furious with no fear of God nor regard for man. He would be openly daring and blasphemous, cruel, barbarous, and heartless. When the Lord forewarned Israel of the result of being wayward and disobedient, He spoke of the kind of nation that would deal with them. His words parallel those of our text. “A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young : and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee” (Deu 28:50-52).

The words “understanding dark sentences” refers to his area of intellectual expertise. His keen mind would be devoted to fulfilling sinister and atrocious plans. He would be a master of deceit, calling upon dark powers to fulfill his heartless policies. He would be able to delude men and constrain them to do wickedly – even to do things they never thought themselves capable of doing.

There is an additional perspective to be seen here. This wicked ruler would not easily be deceived by those against whom he came. No cunning negotiations would turn him from his intentions. He would be able to see through subtle compromises put forth by vacillating Jews. Nothing would turn him from his purpose, but Divine power.

The idea is that God was going to turn His people over to such a despot. They would so provoke Him as to leave Him no other recourse, for God “cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:13). Thus it is written, “God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies” (Nahum 1:2).

Those who set themselves against God make Him their enemy, and He has declared what He will do to His enemies. He cannot deny Himself in that matter. Tenderly and fervently He called upon Israel to turn from their wicked ways. Hear Him plead with His people. “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye” (Ezek 18:31-32).

God Is Still Speaking

The nature of the Lord has not changed. He still pleads with men to forsake their evil ways lest judgment come upon them. Hear Him as He reasons with the church. “And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way ; but let it rather be healed” (Heb 12:13). The phrase “lest that which is lame be turned out of the way” is an intriguing one. It is not referring to going off a pathway, but to being thrown out of joint. Other translations read, “so that what is lame may not be dislocated,” NKJV “put out of joint,” NASB “may not be disabled,” NIV and “will not be maimed.” NJB The idea is that the out-of-joint condition no longer allows the person to walk on the high way, thus being wholly cut off from God.

The condition of the church at large, with its many backsliders and departed ones, is filling up the cup of its iniquity. There is too much of this kind of thing, and it is wholly inexcusable in this day of salvation. Men need to learn from the passage we are considering that they ought to desist from tempting God. Such is not a wise course to pursue.

NOT BY HIS OWN POWER

“ 24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.”

Although this passage is often used to speak of things yet in the future, I want to emphasize that Gabriel associated this despot with the kingdom of Greece, which kingdom was overthrown by Rome. This passage concerns things to occur in the interim between Malachi and Matthew – the final period before the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Although we are speaking of heart-wrenching judgments, they were necessary to prepare the way for the coming Savior. The sins of the Jews had so desensitized them that the notion of a Savior no longer entered into their minds. They were so bent on doing their own pleasure they cared nothing for the Lord’s will and purpose. The situation called for radical heavenly surgery.

Surely you can see the parallel with our own time. If ever there was a passage with contemporary relevance, it is this one.

NOT BY HIS OWN POWER

“ And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power . . . ” Other versions read, “He will become very strong, but not by his own power,” NIV “And his power shall be strengthened, but not by his own force,” DOUAY and “His power will grow greater and greater, though not through any power of his own.” NJB

However great Antiochus Epiphanes may have appeared, his power was given to him, for “there is no authority except from God” NKJV (Rom 13:1). He would, like the Assyrian, be the rod of God’s anger, and a staff in the hand of His indignation (Isa 10:5). He would have power against the Jews, like Pilate had power against Jesus, because it was given to him from above (John 19:11). Even as the beast of the Revelation, it was “given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them” (Rev 13:7). In the case of the Jews, this is what their own iniquity brought upon them.

Seen properly, Antiochus Epiphanes was a mere pawn in the hands of the Lord to execute His will. As soon as that will was wrought, and the cup of iniquity had been emptied, he would be removed from the stage of Divine purpose.

From yet another point of view, Satan was given an opportunity to wreak havoc upon the people, the sacrifice, and the sanctuary. In this, the devil would no doubt find great delight. But it is not his purpose that would ultimately be served, but that of God Himself. The people would have a mind for being clean when this chastening was over. In this case, the very thing that Paul said of an individual is being done in a nation. Of a fornicator in Corinth Paul wrote, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus ” (1 Cor 5:4-5). Following the deeds of Antiochus Epiphanes the people would be more open to the promises of a Savior, a Deliverer, and a king who would reign in righteousness!

DESTROYING WONDERFULLY

“ . . . and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice . . . ” Other translations use the following instead of “destroy wonderfully:” “destroy fearfully,” NKJV and “cause fearful destruction,” NIV

The word “wonderfully” means surpassing, extraordinary, and beyond ones power. It is not the destruction itself that is the point, but the ones and the city against which it is wrought. The ones to whom God said, “And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite” (Ex 33:2), will now drive His people from His sanctuary! The hand of Him who said, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper,” (Isa 54:17), will now turn them over to their enemies with their weaponry. The angel of the Lord would no longer camp round about them to deliver them from fear of evil (Psa 34:7).

Antiochus Epiphanes would be successful in his opposition to the people. He would “prosper” in

his diabolical designs, and practice without any seeming restraint. I cannot help but again observe, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31).

THE MIGHTY AND HOLY PEOPLE

“ . . . and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.” Other versions read, “He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people,” NKJV “He will destroy mighty men and the holy people,” NASB and “He shall destroy the powerful and the people of the holy ones.” NIV

Here we have a two-fold triumph. First, mighty nations around Israel would fall to Epiphanes. Their might would not be sufficient to withstand his assaults. This triumph would not be because of Epiphanes’ shrewdness of strength, but because God gave these nations to him.

Of particular significance, however, is the reference to the “holy people.” These are the Jews, and they are not “holy” by character, but because they were chosen by God. In fact, they will be subjected to Antiochus Epiphanes because they willingly filled up the cup of their iniquity. Yet, from the standpoint of Divine choice, they were a “holy people,” and in potential as well.

This kind of reasoning is found in frequent references to Israel, and the church as well.

- “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation . These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Ex 19:5-6).
- “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people” (Deut 7:7).
- “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth” (Deut 14:2).
- “Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk” (Deut 14:21).
- “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation , a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Pet 2:10).

Sound Reasoning

Some cannot conceive of such a people being subjected to the will of their enemies. They imagine that Divine commitment cannot be reversed nor His protection withdrawn. Yet God has extended Himself to show the fallacy of such thinking. He delivered the people of His own choice from Egypt, then “afterward destroyed them that believed not” (Jude 1:5). Angels who once has an estate in the glory, because they “left their own habitation,” kept not that estate but are presently “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day” (Jude 1:6).

If those toward whom God’s wrath was focused can come into His favor, what form of reasoning leads one to believe those within His favor can never depart from that state? If God can be provoked to forgive a sinner because of repentance, what leads anyone to believe He cannot be provoked to anger by those who depart from the faith? God’s nature cannot change. He cannot turn away from the penitent, nor can he be inclined toward the impenitent. There is no excuse for anyone failing to see this. There are too many accounts in the Word of God that confirm these things to be true. Let us receive them eagerly.

This has been Gabriel’s explanation of the following. “And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them” (Dan 8:10). The casting down of some of the host and of the stars was the destruction of the “holy people.”

HE SHALL BE BROKEN

“ 25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand.”

Gabriel continues to open up the vision of the little horn who waxed great against the people God had chosen. He does so because the message is difficult to receive. It runs counter to patterns of human thought, and is nearly beyond imagination. But this is the wrath poured out because the cup of the Jews iniquity was full.

CAUSING CRAFT TO PROSPER

“And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand . . .” Other versions read, “Through his cunning He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule,” NKJV “And through his shrewdness He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence,” NASB “And his designs will be turned

against the holy people, causing deceit to do well in his hand” BBE

Here, the word “craft” means deception, fraud, deceit, guile, subtlety, and treachery. It is “craft” because it is crafted by wicked genius. Such, it is said, will “prosper” through the cunning wit of this ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes.

On the surface, it appeared as though this man was invincible. His shrewdness moved him to do whatever he wanted. He did not use wise methods, but deceitful ones. This substantiates that while he was given his power from God, Satan was the messenger that brought it. We should not stumble at such an arrangement, for God gave Paul a thorn that was delivered by Satan (2 Cor12:7).

MAGNIFY HIMSELF IN HIS HEART

“ . . . and he shall magnify himself in his heart . . . ” Other versions read, “he shall exalt himself in his heart,” NKJV “in his own mind he shall be great,” NIV “and his heart shall be puffed up,” DOUAY and “he will grow arrogant of heart.” NJB

Pride always “goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov 16:18). One of the distinctions between the wicked and the righteous is the impact success has upon them. The righteous give glory to God for their prosperity, whatever measure it may be. The wicked, however, take the honor for their success unto themselves, refusing to give it to the Lord. Such responses always get God’s attention, whether they are in an untaught heathen or a covenanted people. Nebuchadnezzar was not in covenant with the God of heaven. Yet when he became proud, viewing great Babylon as his own work, God brought him down (Dan 4:30-31). Belshazzar was not in covenant with God. Yet, when he did not learn from the experience of Nebuchadnezzar, and became proud in his heart, God also brought him down (Dan 5:18-24).

There are foolish theologians who say God’s law had no applicability to the heathen. It is true, that as a covenant it was only made with Israel. But as a law, it applied to Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Antiochus Epiphanes as well. Pride is a breach of God’s law, which demands that God be loved with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Now Antiochus Epiphanes has crossed the line, just as surely as Nebuchadnezzar did. As Habakkuk said of Nebuchadnezzar, “Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god” (Hab 1:11). He did this in his heart, thinking of himself “more highly than he ought to think” (Rom 12:3).

BY PEACE DESTROY MANY

“ . . . and by peace shall destroy many . . . ” Other versions read, “He shall destroy many in their

prosperity,” NKJV “he will destroy many while they are at ease,” NASB “Without warning he shall destroy many,” NIV and “in their security he shall destroy many.” ASV

Two thoughts are delivered in this expression. First, coming as a peacemaker he snares them with cunning words and purposes. Second, while they are imagining him to be their friend and ally, he comes on them suddenly and unawares, destroying them. The emphasis seems to be that his conquests were easy for him, with little or no resistance. First he brought about an environment of peace, then he swept in for the kill.

However, he is being moved along by the pride of his own heart, and gives no thought to the fact his foes had been given to him. As it is said of the wicked, “God is not in all his thoughts” (Psa 10:4).

STAND UP AGAINST THE PRINCE OF PRINCES

“ . . . he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes . . . ” Other versions read, “he shall even rise against the Prince of princes,” NKJV “he will even oppose the Prince of princes,” NASB and “he shall take his stand against the Prince of princes.” NIV

This is the explanation of, “Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down” (Dan 8:11). Antiochus Epiphanes did not come against Jehovah by name, but against the things belonging to Him – His people, His sacrifice, His altar, and His sanctuary. Those who stand up against what God has ordained stand up against God Himself.

The book of Maccabees speaks extensively concerning the action of Antiochus Epiphanes against God (1 Macc 1:20-24,29-32,44-50). Having already commented on this, I here provide an observation made by an earlier commentator, who quotes from that section of the maccabees. “In the execution of the purposes of Antiochus, he ‘entered the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick, and all the vessels thereof; and the table of showbread, the pouring vessels, etc., and stripped the temple of all the ornaments of gold.’ After two years he again visited the city, and ‘smote it very sore, and destroyed much people of Israel, and when he had taken the spoils of the city he set it on fire, and pulled down the walls thereof on every side.’ Everything in Jerusalem was made desolate. Her sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness, her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into reproach, her honor into contempt.’ Subsequently, by a solemn edict, and by more decisive acts, he put a period to the worship of God in the temple, and polluted and defiled every part of it.” ALBERT BARNES

Of those events the angel Gabriel said, “he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes.” We should expect a word concerning the demise of this wicked king to follow immediately – and it does.

BROKEN WITHOUT HAND

“ . . . but he shall be broken without hand.” Other versions read, “broken without human means,” NKJV “broken without human agency,” NASB “not by human power,” NIV “not by human hands,” NRSV and “though not by men’s hands.” BBE

Babylon fell to Darius, or the Medes and Persians. The Medes and Persians fell to Greece, or to Alexander the Great. No one conquered Alexander, for he died of a brief disease while in bed. Now we are told the little horn who waxed great is also broken “without hand,” or without being overthrown by one of his peers or a competitive government. God removed Alexander, and now God removes Antiochus Epiphanes.

According to the book of Maccabees, this wicked king died “of grief and remorse in Babylon. He was on an expedition to Persia, and there laid siege to Elymais, and was defeated, and fled to Babylon, when, learning that his forces in Palestine had been repulsed, penetrated with grief and remorse, he sickened and died. According to the account in the second book of Maccabees (2 Macc. 9), his death was most distressing and horrible . . . All the statements given of his death, by the authors of the books of Maccabees, by Josephus, by Polybius, by Q. Curtius, and by Arrian (see the quotations in Prideaux), agree in representing it as attended with every circumstance of horror that can be well supposed to accompany a departure from this world, and as having every mark of the just judgment of God. The Divine prediction in Daniel was fully accomplished, that his death would be “without hand,” in the sense that it would not be by human instrumentality; but that it would be by a direct Divine infliction. When Antiochus died, the opposition to the Jews ceased, and their land again had peace and rest.” ALBERT BARNES

Of the death of this despot, Matthew Henry says the following. “He, hearing that the Jews had cast the image of Jupiter Olympius out of the temple, where he had placed it, was so enraged at the Jews that he vowed he would make Jerusalem a common burial-place, and determined to march thither immediately; but no sooner had he spoken these proud words than he was struck with an incurable plague in his bowels; worms bred so fast in his body that whole flakes of flesh sometimes dropped from him; his torments were violent, and the stench of his disease such that none could endure to come near him. He continued in this misery very long. At first he persisted in his menaces against the Jews; but at length, despairing of his recovery, he called his friends together, and acknowledged all those miseries to have fallen upon him for the injuries he had done to the Jews and his profaning the temple at Jerusalem. Then he wrote courteous letters to the Jews, and vowed that if he recovered he would let them have the free exercise of their religion. But, finding his disease grow upon him, when he could no longer endure his own smell, he said, It is meet to submit to God, and for man who is mortal not to set himself in competition with God, and so died miserably in a strange land, on the mountains of Pacata nea Babylon: so *Ussher's Annals, A.M. 3840* , about 160 years before the birth of Christ.”

GOD IS IN CONTROL

Once again, the Lord has confirmed to Daniel that He is in control, setting up and removing kings as He wills. The world is not in a chaotic tailspin! The people of God have good reason to hope, and ought not to despair or become filled with melancholy.

In Israel we see that both commendation and chastening are under the strict government of God. This is designed to encourage wayward souls to repent, and turn their steps toward the God who has loved them, and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for their sins. For those who are trusting in the

Lord, they are not to allow the prospects of the future to disorient them. If, indeed, perilous times are ahead for us, the days will be numbered as surely as they were for the opponents of Israel. Things may get terrible, but they will not get hopeless.

Also, this record should encourage us to amend any of our ways that are not acceptable to God, and thus avoid His chastening hand. It is written, “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor 11:31). It is quite possible that many of our difficulties can be avoided by simply living to please God.

IT IS TRUE , BUT SHUT IT UP

“ 26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.”

Daniel is careful to protect the honor and glory of God. He will not leave us thinking this whole matter is merely being interpreted by him, for “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Pet 1:20). No prophet recorded his own view of what he saw. Like a true man of God, Daniel “sought” for the meaning of the vision, and did not engage in an effort to figure it out himself.

IT IS TRUE

“And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true . . .” Other versions read “evenings and mornings.” NKJB/NASB/NIV The reference is to the period of 2,300 evenings and mornings (8:14). What Gabriel means is, “This period of oppression WILL come, and it WILL last 2,300 days.” He has not told this to Daniel so he can pray and somehow avert the judgment, as Nineveh did. This is something that is cast in stone, and can in no wise be averted. It “IS TRUE.” The vision was no illusion. Not the smallest portion of it will fail of fulfillment.

Years later, when the vision comes to pass, the people will be able to calculate the 2,300 days and give glory to God for its accuracy, as well as the breaking of the little horn and the termination of the indignation.

God is going to suffer His people to be severely oppressed. He will allow His sacrifices to be taken away by a ruthless Gentile. He will allow His altar to be profaned. He will allow His sanctuary to be defiled and cast down. Men may argue that such things cannot be, but they are true. And it will all come

to pass because iniquity's cup became full, and God could no longer forbear it.

SHUT UP THE VISION

“ . . . wherefore shut thou up the vision . . . ” Other versions read, “seal up the vision,” NKJV “keep the vision secret,” NASB “close thou up the vision,” DARBY and “hide thou the vision.” YLT

This vision was not to be made known, particularly to the Babylonians. This was now the third year of Belshazzar's reign, and he would soon be deposed. It would not go well with the Jews if the Persians became aware of this prophecy. The vision included the words concerning the prospering of the Medes and Persians, their overthrow, the dominance of Greece, the demise of the first king, the division of Greece, and the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes who would come against “the pleasant land.” All of that was to be kept secret.

IT SHALL BE FOR MANY DAYS

“ . . . for it shall be for many days.” Other versions read, “it refers to many days in the future,” NKJV “it pertains to many days in the future,” NASB “it concerns the distant future,” NIV “it refers to many days from now,” NRSV “there are still many days to go,” NJB and “none of these things will happen for a long time.” NLT

One of the primary reasons for the secrecy was the length of time until it would come to pass. The rise of Alexander was yet three hundred years in the future, and the breaking off of Antiochus Epiphanes nearly four hundred and fifty years in the future.

Daniel could be entrusted with this vision, but few others would be able to handle it. In some, it would cause great despair. In others, a sense of futility would dominate them. Some enemies would hear it and rejoice at the sorrows that would befall the Jews. It is best, therefore, that vision be kept secret.

However, “secret” cannot mean a total lack of disclosure, for the vision is written in this book. I understand, therefore, that it was sealed among the Jews themselves, and not made public among the heathen, as was Nebuchadnezzar's dreams and Belshazzar's vision. A similar word was said to Isaiah which will serve to clarify this word. “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples” (Isa 8:16). Verse twenty seven will suggest the vision was, in fact, made known to others. I can only surmise that this was done discreetly. Those with whom he shared the vision were no doubt kindred spirits.

I FAINTED AND WAS SICK

“ 27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.”

We should not be surprised if a vision of this magnitude has a profound impact upon the prophet Daniel. A man who is “greatly beloved” of God will be greatly impacted by what God says.

I WAS SICK FOR CERTAIN DAYS

“And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days . . .” Other versions read, “exhausted and sick many days,” NASB “exhausted and lay ill for several days,” NIV “was overcome and lay sick for some days,” NRSV “languished and was sick,” DOUAY “lost consciousness ; I was ill for several days,” NJB “I became sick for days.” YLT

Daniel saw the vision and heard the explanation of it from mighty Gabriel the angel. It appears as though when he pondered it, considering what was coming upon the people of God, it greatly affected him. He could not hear of the removal of the daily sacrifice, the defilement of the altar, and the casting down of the sanctuary without it touching him deeply. It drained him of his strength, and he became sick.

This is the same kind of impact the news of a corrupted church had upon John the beloved. “And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration” (Rev 17:6). To hear of the people of God so provoking Him with their sin that Gentile hordes are released against them is no small thing. To hear of the desecration of anything sanctified to God is deeply disturbing to those who know Him.

When the Apostles spoke of a falling away, they did so with a sense of alarm (Acts 20:30-31; 1 Tim 4:1-6; 2 Tim 3:1-5; 2 Thess 2:3-12; 2 Pet 2:1-3; Jude 1:18-19; 1 John 4:1-3). When you read their words, you sense they were not easy to say.

Those who can easily speak of a falling away, or of the severe chastening of God’s people, have calloused hearts. When men can speak of great and severe judgments of God as though they were just something that was going to happen, they are seriously lacking in their hearts.

Daniel was so involved in this experience that his flesh became exhausted and sick. Often, the bodies of people have an effect upon their souls. In Daniel’s case, his soul impacted his body. Far better, in my judgment, to have that kind of association with these earthen vessels.

I ROSE UP AND DID THE KING'S BUSINESS

“ . . . afterward I rose up, and did the king's business . . . ” We do not know how long it took Daniel to fully recover, but it was several days. Afterward, he got up and “went about the king’s business.” NKJV After being tutored by Gabriel, I can only imagine what a contrast that business must have been to Daniel. The affairs of State surely appeared trivial after that. However, Daniel faithfully executed them anyway, thereby setting a noble example for us all. Remember, he had been shown the demise of the kingdom in which he was an officer. Nevertheless, he did rise up and go about the king’s business, doing it in his usual expert way.

ASTONISHED AT THE VISION

“ . . . and I was astonished at the vision . . . ” Other versions read, “I was astounded at the vision,” NASB “I was appalled by the vision,” NIV “I wondered at the vision,” ASV and “I was greatly troubled by the vision.” NLT

Here, the word “astonished” means appalled, stunned, made desolate, and devastated. STRONGS This was the impact of the vision on Daniel’s human constitution. Things that are regular considerations in heaven are highly disruptive upon the earth. That is because they deal with principalities and powers in heavenly places, as well as earthly dignities.

Daniel had been made privy to the Persian and Grecian empires, key individuals within them, and the devastation of the people of God. His mind had been stretched, his emotions drained, and his spirit burdened. Yet, in all of this, he was able to return to the king’s business. Spiritual astonishment, therefore, does not rob the soul of fulfilling practical duties related to this life. Faith can be amazed at revelation, yet fulfill mundane duties to the glory of God. It makes its possessor versatile.

NONE UNDERSTOOD IT

“ . . . but none understood it.” Other versions read, “there was none to explain it,” NASB “it was beyond understanding,” NIV “I was dismayed by the vision and did not understand it,” NRSV “no one was able to give the sense of it,” BBE and “keeping the vision a secret and still not understanding what it meant.” NJB Thus the various versions present two different ideas to us. First, that Daniel himself did not understand the vision. Second, no one to whom he told the vision comprehended its meaning.

I am going to assume Daniel shut up the vision the same way Isaiah did – among the Lord’s disciples, or those who had an interest in these things. I also understand that none comprehending the vision refers to its details, and not the general outline that was revealed to Daniel by Gabriel.

A Lesson To Be Learned

Unless specifically revealed, details of a prophecy are best spoken of after the fulfillment of that prophecy. When speaking of the future, we should not be too eager to spell out all of its details. What is revealed is sufficient to carry us through life with uplifting confidence, even though everything may not be clear to us. There are some matters that God has simply not told us, and we ought to be willing to let the matter rest there, not trying to force some preconceived dogma into the text of Scripture.

CONCLUSION

There is so much to be learned from this section of Scripture. The manner in which the Lord governs His kingdom is unveiled significantly in this vision. Allow me to share a few of these perceptions.

- God is aware of the governments of this world.
- He is not indifferent to the things they do.
- Worldly governments are answerable to God for what they do.
- The Lord notes the pride in political entities.
- The Lord is incensed by continued sin in His people.
- Iniquity can arrive at a point where Divine wrath can no longer be subdued.
- God will use people who are worse than His own people to punish them.
- Like Daniel, men are to inquire into what God has revealed.
- The chastening of the Lord is strictly controlled.
- Those who are eager and aggressive to touch things belonging to God will suffer the consequences.
- Great revelations can be received in places not devoted to God.

- The future is planned.
- Divine appointments drive the affairs of men.
- When men cease to serve God's purpose, He can remove them.
- Great rulers can be brought down without any human agency.
- Governments are important only to the degree that they interface with the purpose of God.
- When God's people do not use what He has given to them, He will take it from them.
- Your body can be affected by what your soul has apprehended.
- There are matters that are not to be spoken of to the uninformed.

This will suffice to make the point. Such texts as this are to be seen as food for the soul, instruction for the mind, and encouragement for the heart. An understanding of them is to be pursued.

The Prophecy of Daniel

DANIEL'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER, #1

Lesson #27

INTRODUCTION

Daniel faithfully records his revelations and experiences. He does so in keeping with the manner of the Kingdom. Things that “happened” to the people of God in the past are “examples” of Divine manners, and “are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor 10:11). Events recorded in the Word of God are never isolated from Divine purpose. While their connection with that purpose may not always be evident to the casual observer, yet that association is there. God neither speaks nor works independently of His “eternal purpose.” He is never occupied with trivia, novelty, or mere historical happenings.

A novice, for example, might think that the kingdoms of Babylon, the Medes and the Persians, Greece, and Rome, have nothing to do with the working and objective of the God of heaven. I am sure many were of that opinion during the time those kingdoms were dominant. However, they were pawns on the chessboard of eternal purpose, used to chasten the people of God, rebuild the house of God, and prepare the world for the entrance of the Savior. Further, after their role had been fulfilled, they were removed by the God who set them up.

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

It is vital that we learn from the past. Things not only “happened” for our example, but “were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4). There is a sense in which those who do not learn from these records are “unlearned” in Kingdom matters (2 Pet 3:16). This condition

causes them to be more vulnerable to the wicked one, and greatly inhibits their growth in Christ Jesus. Further, there is no way to ultimately triumph if this condition continues. Salvation is never by default, and always requires spiritual advancement and fellowship with both the Father and the Son.

With these things in mind, here are some of the things that can be learned from this text – a text that deals with the past, yet is applicable to the future.

- The unfaithfulness of God’s people is never overlooked by God.
- God’s longsuffering involves the allotment of space to repent.
- Heathen kings are not exempt from Divine judgment.
- Those who touch people or things belonging to God have risen up against God Himself.
- Those who are allowed to harm the people of God, whether individuals like Job, or a body of people like Judah, operate under Divine limitations in both time and what they do.
- God can use a heathen to get his work done, as He did with Cyrus.
- Those who oppose the people of God can be quickly removed.
- A person of faith, like Daniel, can be reared in a heathen culture without being contaminated by it.
- The things God reveals are not always attended by total clarity, as with the vision with which we are now dealing .

The proper consideration of events recorded in Scripture will always yield benefits to the believer. Far better to muse upon these things than to allow our minds to linger on contemporary events and issues. While it is not unlawful to ponder what is happening in our time, it must always be set within the context of what God has done, declares He is doing, and what He has promised He will do. This context will keep us from being deterred by a fear of calamity, or a haphazard attitude brought on by an unwarranted sense of safety.

SCRIPTURAL PRAYERS

The text before us is a prayer. I have found Scriptural prayers to be an area of unusually profitable Divine tutelage. Paul alludes to the profitability of prayers in his Epistle to the Corinthians. “What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified” (1 Cor 14:17).

The saying of “Amen” does not refer to a mere formality, but to an expression of consent and agreement. The prayer that was heard, even though it was the “giving of thanks,” proved to be an advantage to those who heard it. The same may be said of the prayers recorded in Scripture. Some of them are listed below for your consideration.

- Abraham praying about his childlessness (Gen 15:1-6).
- Abraham's prayer for Ishmael (Gen 17:18-22).
- Abraham's prayer concerning the destruction of Sodom (Gen 18:23-32).
- Moses' intercessory prayer for Israel (Ex 33:12-17).
- The prayer of Abraham's eldest servant as he sought a wife for Isaac (Gen 14:12-14).
- Gideon's request for a sign (Judges 6:36-40).
- Solomon's prayer for wisdom (1 Kings 14).
- Rebekah's prayer concerning the struggling children within her womb (Gen 25:22-23).
- Jacob's prayer for deliverance from Esau (Gen 32:8-11).
- Moses' prayer concerning the bitter waters at Marah (Ex 15:24-25).
- Moses' cry for help at Horeb (Ex 17:4-6).
- Moses' prayer when the Israelites murmured, wanting flesh to eat (Num 11:11-15).
- Moses' prayer for the healing of Miriam (Num 12:13-15).
- Menoah's prayer for direction in raising Samson (Judges 13:8-90).
- Samson's prayer for strength one last time (Judges 16:28-30).
- Hannah's prayer for a child (1 Sam 1:10-13).
- David's prayer, asking if the city of Keilah would be delivered into his hand (1 Sam 23:10-12).
- David asking if he should pursue Ziklag (1 Sam 30:8).
- Elijah's prayer for life to be given to a young boy who had died (1 Kings 17:20-22).
- The prayer of Jabez (1 Chron 4:10).
- Hezekiah's prayer for deliverance from Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:14-19).

- Hezekiah’s prayer when he was sick unto death (2 Kings 20:1-3).
- Ezekiel’s prayer to have the type of cakes changed that he was to eat (Ezek 4:12-15).
- The penitential prayer of David (Psa 51).
- The prayer of Jesus concerning His death (Matt 26:39).
- The prayer of Jesus for His disciples and those who would believe on Him through their word (John 17).
- Ezra’s prayer of contrition for the people (Ezra 9:5-15).
- The prayer of the people of Judah in the time of Nehemiah (Neh 9:6-38).
- Jeremiah’s prayer concerning the Babylonian captivity (Jer 32:17-25).
- Habakkuk’s prayer concerning the spread of iniquity (Hab 1:2-4).
- Prayer of the Apostles concerning a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:24-25).
- Prayer of the early church when subjected to persecution (Acts 4:24-30).

These and other prayers reveal how faith moves individuals to speak to the Lord. They show how holy men and women reasoned with God, and how they regarded various circumstances. Faith has a consistent impact upon how a person thinks, and how they handle the Word of God.

We will find the prayer of Daniel to be rich with expression, perspective, and understanding. Through his words, it will become apparent that prayer plays a vital role in the implementation of Divine objectives. The Kingdom of God does not run on automatic pilot. It involves the will, thoughts, words, and participation of the saints. At no point are they excluded.

IN THE FIRST YEAR OF DARIUS

“9:1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans.”

Daniel now moves to the time following the fall of Babylon, as recorded in the fifth chapter: “In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two

years old” (Dan 5:31). The first year of the reign of Darius was a year of political transition. The Babylonian, or Chaldean, empire was terminated and a new governmental regime was initiated. While Daniel makes no extensive mention of the involvements of this transition, they were no doubt significant in the flesh. Belshazzar was murdered, and the city of Babylon overtaken in a single night. The impact of this upon the human spirit must have been significant.

But Daniel, living by faith, does not recall the fateful events associated with the fall of Babylon – the “head of gold” of Daniel two, and the mighty lion with eagles wings of Daniel seven. Instead of reviewing the political shift of power during the first year of Darius the Mede, he writes of his perceptions of a change that was to be wrought among the people of God. The Babylonian captivity was about to end. It is clear that in Daniel’s thinking the determinations and working of the Lord superceded any of the works or experiences of men.

AN OBSERVATION

Those who desire to be used by the Lord must become spiritually expert in their thinking. They must not live so as to be easily drawn aside by worldly matters. They must advance in their ability to correlate what is happening with what God has promised.

DARIUS

Previously in this book, Darius was simply introduced as “Darius the Mede,” who set one hundred and twenty princes over the kingdom of Babylon, three presidents over them, and Daniel as the chief of the presidents (6:1-2). Because he preferred Daniel above all others, Darius had thought to “set him over the whole realm.” It was then that the other presidents and princes set in motion a strategy that concluded with Daniel being thrown into the lions’ den (6:3-25). We are then told that Daniel “prospered in the reign of Darius” (6:28).

Now Daniel provides some additional information.

- The son of Ahasuerus. There are three men mentioned in Scripture that bear this name. Ezra mentions the first (Ezra 4:6), Esther the second (Esth 1:1), and Daniel the third (Dan 9:1). Ezra refers to a man reigning in the period 529-522 B.C. He is considered to be Cambyses, son of Cyrus, and was a Persian, not a Mede. This is not the Ahasuerus to whom Esther the queen was married (Esth 2:16-17). That king reigned during a period between 486-464 B.C., and was also a Persian, reigning in Shushan. The “Ahasuerus” of our text reigned during 594 B.C., and is consider to be Astyages of profane history, last king of Media.
- Of the seed of the Medes. Other versions read, “of the lineage of the Medes,” NKJV “of Median descent,” NASB “a Mede by descent,” NIV and “by birth a Mede.” NIV This distinguishes this Darius from “Darius the Persian” (Neh 12:22), and his lineage from that of the Persian kings. It is another way of saying “Darius the Median,” or “Darius the Mede” NKJV (Dan 5:31:11:1).
- Made king over the realm of the Chaldeans. Another version reads “made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom.” NIV The dominant part of the Medo-Persian kingdom was found in Persia. History confirms that through Cyrus, Darius was made the ruler of Babylon, or “the ream of the Chaldeans.”

The following is an excerpt from the writings of John Gill on this subject. He says Darius was made ruler over the realm of the Chaldeans “by Cyrus his nephew; who having taken Babylon, and settled his affairs, undertook a journey to Persia, and made Media in his way; where he met with his uncle Cyaxares, the same with this Darius, and delivered the kingdom of Babylonto him, and married his daughter, with whom he had for her dowry the kingdom of Media, as Xenophon relates. JOHN GILL

The “first year” of Darius’ reign occurred in the year B.C. 538, which was the year Babylon fell. That was sixty-eight years from the time Daniel was taken captive into Babylon (B.C. 606). This is of particular importance because of the verses that follow. The seventy-year captivity was coming to a close, and the knowledge of it moved Daniel.

I UNDERSTOOD BY BOOKS

“ 2 In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”

The attention of Daniel now turns from the kingdoms of this world – which were preparatory to the Kingdom of God which would decimate them all – to the immediate dealings of God with His people Judah. Times and seasons are in the power of God alone (Dan 2:21; Acts 1:7). He alone determines them, and reveals them to the sons of men. A time that God had precisely determined now becomes the focus of Daniel’s thinking.

UNDERSTANDING BY BOOKS

“I Daniel understood by books . . .” Other versions read, “I understood by THE books,” NKJV “observed in THE books,” NASB “understood from the Scriptures,” NIV “perceived in THE books,” NRSV “saw clearly from THE books,” BBE “was studying the Scriptures,” NJB and “was studying the writings of the prophets.” NLT

The term “books” applies to the Scriptures in general, and the prophets in particular. The word “books” does not refer to mere writing, but to purposeful or commissioned writing. It is equivalent to the word “Script ures,” which means “writing.” Technically, a “book” is a writing devoted to some theme or subject. Spiritually, it is a record of some Divine thought or intent that is intended for men.

Daniel was not studying Babylonian literature when this insight came to him. Rather, he was exposing his mind to the Word of God, living, as it was, “by every word of God” (Lk 4:4). He had been persuaded of a truth also made known to Paul: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17).

It is beneficial to ponder this facet of Daniel’s life. He was a political “president,” being made chief of the three primary “presidents” in the Chaldean kingdom, by Darius himself (Dan 6:2-3). However, his worldly duties did not keep him from the Scriptures.

Too, is it not a token of the favor of God that the Scriptures remained with Daniel in the time of the captivity, and were not destroyed in Nebuchadnezzar’s sacking of Jerusalem and the Temple? We should learn from this that the presence of the Scriptures, as well as their indispensable message, is maintained by the God of heaven. Where there is

an appetite for and reliance upon the Word of God, provision for that appetite will be supplied.

Prophets Need to Study

We must remember that Daniel was a prophet, and not an ordinary one at that. Further, he was “greatly beloved” by God (9:23; 10:11,19), and is the only man in Scripture of whom this is said. He was to God what John was to Jesus – “the disciple whom He loved” (John 21:20).

Ponder what this man had received from God.

- Knowledge, skill in all learning and wisdom (1:17a).
- Understanding in all visions and dreams (1:17b).
- The revelation of the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great statue (2:19).
- The revelation of the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the tree that was cut down (4:19-27).
- The meaning of the strange writing on the wall of Belshazzar’s palace (5:24-28).
- An extended revelation of the nature of the four empires of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (7:2-7).
- The revelation of a despotic ruler and kingdom that would speak blasphemies (7:8).
- Insight into the throne of judgment (7:9-10).
- An understanding of the overthrow of the despotic power, called “the little horn” (7:11-12).
- The giving of the Kingdom to the Son of Man, or the Messiah (7:13-14).
- An interpretation of the vision he saw concerning the four great kingdoms (7:16-27).
- Details concerning the fall of the Medo-Persian empire, and the rise of the Grecian empire (8:2-7).
- The death of Alexander the Great, and the consequent division of his kingdom (8:8).
- A time of judgment in which the holy land would be invaded, the daily sacrifice removed, the altar desecrated, and the sanctuary cast down (8:9-12).
- The precise duration of this time of desolation (8:13-14);

- An extended explanation of the above vision from Gabriel the angel (8:15-27).

This is the man who was studying the Scriptures, searching through them with diligence and consistency. The great revelations given to him did not remove the necessity for feeding upon the good word of God. If prophets need to study the Scripture, what may be said of others?

The Study of Scripture

It is unfortunate that the study of the Scriptures is not prevalent in the professed church. A wave of Scriptural illiteracy has swept over the American church that is most remarkable – and it has occurred when there are more Bibles and more translations than has ever before existed. Recently (1/6/2003), a close friend of mine told me of an experience he just had in a local Bible College. He asked a class of over forty advanced students how many of them had read the entire Bible. Eight of them said they had done so. I have asked the same question of a significant number of churches, and have never received an answer of any magnitude. There were a number of congregations in which not a single person said they had read the entire Bible.

This condition is serious beyond measure. Daniel was away from Jerusalem and the promised land – the appointed center of religious activity under the Law. Furthermore, he was in a heathen land, living in the time of severe Divine chastening – the Babylonian captivity. There is little evidence that many souls were there with whom he could fellowship in the truth. He was also involved in the affairs of state.

Yet, Daniel found time to expose his mind to the Word of God, and thus an understanding of critical matters will be given to him. The scriptures are, indeed, profitable in every way, and are not to be neglected.

JEREMIAH THE PROPHET

“ . . . the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet . . . ”

The phrase “number of years” refers to the length of the Babylonian captivity. There are three particular prophecies in Jeremiah to which Daniel refers. The first mentions the time the captivity would begin. The second mentions the term “desolations,” emphasizing the destruction of the holy city. The third identifies the length of the captivity itself.

- **THE TIME.** “In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying . . . And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him” (Jer 27:1,7). This coincides with Daniel’s record of when he was carried away captive (1:1).
- **THE DESOLATIONS.** “Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations . . . And this whole land shall be a desolation , and an astonishment . . . ” (Jer 25:9,11)
- **THE LENGTH.** “ . . . and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years . And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD,

for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations . . . For thus saith the LORD, 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 25:11b-12; 29:10). This was in accord with the revelation of Moses concerning failing to honor the land sabbaths (Lev 26:34-35,43). Additionally, the Chronicles particularly records that this coincided with Jeremiah’s prophecy (2 Chron 36:21). For 490 years, the land was not given its appointed sabbath rest every seventh year. That amounted to the neglect of seventy land sabbaths. In the captivity, God took them all at once –the seventy-year Babylonian captivity.

The book of Jeremiah contains a little over 45,000 words, or 1,363 paragraphs. The words relating to the duration of the Babylonian captivity are around 220 (0.4888%) words, and eleven sentences (0.807%). It is not possible that a disinterested soul could have perceived these passages. In fact, there are still great numbers of professing believers that still have not seen them.

A Kingdom Mind-set

Daniel had, what I call, a kingdom mind-set. He read the Scriptures with God and His purpose in mind, and correlated them with where he was. His captivity and deportation to Babylon had not robbed him of this manner of thinking. His experience of opposition and time in the lions’ den did not change this mind-set, or way of thinking. He was young when captured, and old at the time of this text, yet that lengthy period of time – no less than sixty eight years – had not dulled his appetite for the Word of God, or his alertness to catch its message.

In the day of judgment, when the counsels of the heart are made manifest (1 Cor 4:5) , how do you suppose it will fare for those who could not sustain an interest in the Word of God? If the Queen of Sheba will rise up in the day of judgment and condemn those who did not energetically pursue the truth available to them (Matt 12:42), what will Daniel say of this generation who neglects God’s Word in a time of freedom? If the city of Nineveh will rise up in the day of judgment and condemn those who did not take advantage of the word delivered to them (Matt 12:41), what will Daniel say of a generation who has remained abysmally ignorant of the Word of God when it was so readily available to them?

Both of the texts just mentioned indicate that whole generations will be judged as well as individuals. When that generation is summoned before the throne, the Lord Jesus pointed out that other generations and individuals would accompany them to the throne, pointing out any inexcusable deficiencies. How sorely we need powerful preachers and teachers who can assist people in assessing the seriousness of neglecting the Word of God. For Daniel, who had far less than the least who are in Christ, to entertain more of an interest in the Word of God than a Christian is a condition that can in no way be justified.

SEVENTY YEARS ACCOMPLISHED

“ . . . that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Concerning the expression “would accomplish,” other versions read, “the completion of,” NASB “would last,” NIV “must be fulfilled,” NRSV and “was to be complete.” BBE

In other words, calculating the number of years from the beginning of the captivity to the first year of the reign of Darius – sixty-eight years – Daniel knew the captivity was about to conclude. I prefer the word “accomplish,” which accents that it was a precise time imposed upon them by the Lord. The captivity would not come short of Jeremiah’s prophesy, lasting, for example, for only sixty-nine years. Nor, indeed, would it extend further than he said, lasting more than seventy years.

Daniel was convinced of the precision of Scripture as well as its inspiration. Such an attitude could never be fostered by higher criticism , or some view of Scripture that allows for scribal errors and translation distortions.

Whatever may be said of such approaches to the Word of God, they are thieves and robbers to the people of God. It is dangerous beyond all description to approach the Word of God as though something within it is not true, is distorted, or is irrelevant.

After all of the arguments have been presented concerning manuscripts, translations, etc., the child of God must approach God's Word persuaded that it is altogether true. He must be willing to hang the destiny of his soul upon that Word, fully persuaded that the mighty God of heaven is as precise in a copy of Jeremiah, for example, as when He gave the revelation to Jeremiah in the first place. I realize such an approach is not acceptable to the person enslaved to academia. However, I am willing to allow the results of such flawed approaches speak for their authenticity. If you are familiar with these approaches to Scripture, you already know such critics are not noted for opening any Divine treasury to us. No person grows in grace under their miserable tutelage.

I SET MY FACE UNTO THE LORD GOD

“ 3 And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.”

We will now behold the effect of understanding upon the man of God. His response will not comport with the ways of the world, but will reveal the impact faith has upon the human spirit. Believing the Word of God moves the one doing so into holy action.

I SET MY FACE

“And I set my face unto the Lord God . . .” Other versions read, “I gave my attention to,” NASB “I turned to,” NIV and “I turned my face to.” NJB

Knowing that the captivity was drawing to a close, Daniel turned his face toward the Lord. From a physical standpoint, he no doubt looked toward Jerusalem, for that was his manner. As it is written, “he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem , he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Dan 6:10).

When Solomon dedicated the Temple, he asked God to hear the prayers of His people prayed “toward this place (the Temple)” (1 Kgs 8:29,30,35). It was said of the Lord Jesus, as He drew close to the time of His death, “And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem” (Luke 13:22). For Daniel, the place where God had placed His name (1 Kgs 11:36) was a great help in his prayers. That place assisted him in recalling the good promises of God, and the many blessings He had conferred upon that holy city. Having read the books of Jeremiah, Daniel was no doubt familiar with this word: “Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind” (Jer 51:50). Those who live by faith do not take lightly places and times associated with Divine visitations. Jacob had his Peniel (Gen 32:30). Noah built an altar where God spoke with him following the flood (Gen 8:20). Abraham built altars in the plain of Moreh and at Bethel, where the Lord appeared to him (Gen 12:7,8). Isaac built an altar following the Lord's appearance to him (Gen 26:25). These, and other similar incidents, confirm that men and women of God did everything they could to recall visitations

and blessings from the Lord.

There Is More

But there is more in this text than the posture of Daniel, although that is a vital part of his prayer. In his heart and mind, Daniel focused on the Lord. He was intent upon speaking with him, and refused to allow anything to turn him from considering the God of heaven. After all, God had sent his nation into captivity, and now the captivity was coming to a close. Only indifference and unthankfulness would keep a person from determining to focus their whole being upon the God with whom they have to do.

God makes commitments for good to those who seek Him “with their whole heart.” This had particular regard to the Babylonian captivity. It is written in Jeremiah: “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart . And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity , and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive ” (Jer 29:13-14).

Jeremiah also said Judah had not obtained favor of the Lord because she “hath not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD” (Jer 3:10).

The words “set my face unto the Lord God” are synonymous with “search for Me with all of your heart.” Daniel was not casual or perfunctory about this. He was not merely fulfilling a routine, or submitting to a requirement. His whole person was involved in this matter.

Here is an aspect of the Divine nature that is scarcely known in our time. The evil triad of institutionalism, professionalism, and academia have opened the door for thieves of casualness and empty form to enter – and the effects have been devastating. The professed church is plagued with half-heartedness, with only a minority of Christians exhibiting any degree of whole-heartedness toward the Lord.

Unacceptable Manners

However, God will not receive half-hearted or casual efforts! That is what He Israel offered to Him, and it was not accepted then. How much less is it acceptable in the “day of salvation,” when the “acceptable time” has been announced through Christ Jesus (2 Cor 6:2)? However a person may choose to defend a lack of interest in the things of God, and casualness about things pertaining to life and godliness, these are not acceptable to God. Neither are those acceptable who are dominated by such reprehensible manners. Whatever may be said about the mercy of God toward His people, together with His longsuffering and tenderness, disinterestedness and casualness provoke Him, and “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31).

These circumstances are why believers are exhorted to throw themselves into living by faith.

- “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col 3:1-2).
- “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice , holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1).

- “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently ” (1 Pet 1:22).
- “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily , as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Col 3:23).

Paul’s Summary

Paul summarized this type of life in these words. “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on , that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” NKJV (Phil 3:12-14).

Lest anyone suppose this was an attitude unique to Paul, he continued, “Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind ; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you” (Phil 3:15). Therefore, if there is any person who has difficulty seeing the necessity of having this mind-set, let him faithfully live unto the Lord, setting his face, as it was, toward the God of heaven. The Lord will make known to the conscientious person that this is the only way of life that He receives.

SEEKING BY PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION

“ . . . to seek by prayer and supplications . . . ” Daniel does not seek the Lord haphazardly , but “BY prayer and supplications.” Other versions read, “ in prayer and petition,” NIV “I gave myself up to prayer , requesting His grace,” BBE “prayers and pleas for mercy,” ESV and “begging for time to pray and to plead.” NJB Several things can be seen by this expression.

- He did not seek the Lord by pondering various evidences before him, but “BY prayer and supplications.”
- He gave himself wholly to this endeavor, not allowing distractions to dominate him.
- He perceived this as a time when pleas for mercy were in order – even though the time of chastening was coming to a close.
- He sought for time to make extended prayers, presenting his “cause” to the Lord, and filling his mouth “with arguments,” as Job was wont to do (Job 5:8; 23:4).

Daniel knew the word spoken through Isaiah, “Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob” (Isa 41:21). With Israel, this was a challenge to come to Him instead of turning to idols (vs 22-23). With Daniel, it was the way he desired to come to the Lord. This is involved in the Divine summons, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa 1:18).

Prayer

The word “prayer” is not an easy one to define. It is a general word used for approaching God with words. Those words may be audible or within the heart alone. When Hannah prayed, for example, she “spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard” (1 Sam 1:13). On the other hand, on one occasion when the early disciples

prayed, they “lifted up their voice to God” (Acts 4:24). The general nature of this word is confirmed by the different forms it can take. Therefore the Spirit speaks of “all kinds of prayer,” NIV emphasizing its diversity (Eph 6:18). In this general sense, “prayer” means communicating with God from the heart, and in faith.

Supplication

The word “supplication” has to do with making a petition or request of God. In this form of prayer men particularize, seeking consideration and mercy from the Lord. There is an urgency in “supplication” that connects it with crying out to the Lord. There is nothing nonchalant about “supplications,” and thus they cannot be encapsulated in a mere routine. Properly seen, “prayer” and “supplications” involve all of the heart. Otherwise, it would not be possible to “seek” the Lord’s face and favor “BY prayer and supplications.”

“Prayer and supplication” are employed under the New Covenant as well as they were the Old. Part of “the whole armor of God” is “all prayer and supplication” (Eph 6:18). Our requests are to be made to God “by prayer and supplication” (Phil 4:6). There is no nonsense in “prayer and supplications.” They are attended by great sobriety, sincerity, and fervency. The person coming to God in such a manner is of a humble and contrite spirit. The heart is uncluttered from the things of this world. Faith is prominent, as well as a quest to please the Lord, and stand in His favor. All of this is confirmed by the words that follow.

FASTING, SACKCLOTH, AND ASHES

“ . . . with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.”

While the prayer exudes from Daniel’s heart, he marshals his body, making it conform to the contrition he feels within. All three of these words apply to the body. They are a means of subordinating it, and refusing to allow it to have the preeminence.

FASTING. “Fasting”, in this case, is abstinence from food, or nourishment. Interestingly, the word in any of its forms does not appear in Genesis through Deuteronomy. Fasting is not mentioned in the Law or its various ceremonies.

In Scripture, no person or persons are said to have fasted from Genesis through the twentieth chapter of Judges.

- The first incident of fasting is recorded in Judges 20:26: “Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD” (Judg 20:26).
- The next incident of fasting occurred when the people gathered together to Samuel to confess their sin (1 Sam 7:6).
- The next time people are said to have “fasted” is when Israel lamented the deaths of Saul and Jonathan (2 Sam 1:12; 1 Chron 10:12).
- The first record of an individual fasting is that of David when the child born to Bethsheba died (2 Sam 12:16,21-23).

- The first person said to have fasted with sackcloth was none other than Ahab – the next incident of fasting recorded in Scripture (1 Kgs 21:27).
- The next occasion of “fasting” occurred many years later, after the Babylonian captivity. It was in the time of Ezra when they besought the Lord for help in returning to the homeland (Ezra 8:23).
- When Nehemiah first heard of the circumstances in Jerusalem, he “fasted” (Neh 1:4).
- Before Esther went in to the king, she also fasted (Esth 4:16).

The word used in our text is a slight variation of the word used in the above texts. It refers to the period of time during which the fasting occurred: i.e., “a fast,” “the fast,” or “time of fasting.” This usage, in a good sense, is found in the following texts: (1 Kgs 21:9,12; 2 Chron 20:3; Ezra 8:21; Neh 9:1; Esth 4:3; 9:31; Psa 35:13; 69:10; 109:24; Isa 58:6; Jer 36:6,9; Joel 1:14; 2:12,15; Jonah 3:5; Zech 8:19).

The idea in this text is that Daniel set himself to seek the Lord, refusing to eat during that time. He would devote all of his energies to his quest for the Lord.

- You may recall that Jesus “fasted forty days and forty nights” before embarking upon His ministry (Matt 4:32).
- The disciples of John were also noted for their fasting (Mark 2:18).
- Cornelius was instructed by the Lord during a time of fasting (Acts 10:30).
- While the early church was fasting, the Holy Spirit told them to separate Barnabas and Saul for the work to which he had called them (Acts 13:2).
- Husbands and wives are said to have times of prayer and fasting (1 Cor 7:5).
- Jesus also said there were certain demons that could only be driven out “by prayer and fasting” (Matt 17:21).

Fasting is a voluntary action , accented by a keen sense of a need for Divine involvement in the affairs of men, or an acute awareness of a need to be more fully in His favor. Thus, we see that the matters occupying Daniel’s mind were of such gravity that the normal activities of life were forfeited in favor of a quest for the Lord.

SACKCLOTH. Sackcloth was a coarse material, apparently made of goat’s or camel’s hair (Rev 6:12). This coarse and rough cloth was a sort of badge of mourning. It was not worn for comfort, and was no doubt most uncomfortable when coming in contact with the skin. In the wearing of sackcloth we see an utter abhorrence of all comfort and ease when approaching the Lord (Job 16:15).

- When Jacob thought Joseph had been killed, he put on sackcloth (Gen 37:34).

- When Hezekiah heard the threats of Sennacherib read, he put on sackcloth (2 Kgs 19:1,2).
- When Mordecai heard that all Jews were to be destroyed, both young and old, little children and women, he put on sackcloth (Esth 4:1).
- Jesus spoke of repentance accompanied by the wearing of sackcloth (Matt 11:21; Lk 10:13).

The wearing of sackcloth is an acknowledgment of a seriously deficient condition that requires unusual mercy and blessing from the Lord.

ASHES. The first person said to put ashes on their head was Tamar after she had been molested by her own brother, Amnon (2 Sam 13:19). Years later, Mordecai put on ashes as he sought to see the Jews preserved in spite of Haaman's threats (Esth 4:1). Isaiah associated "mourning" with "ashes," saying they could be exchanged for beauty from God (Isa 61:3).

Putting ashes upon oneself is an acknowledgment of unworthiness and shame. As Job once said, "He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes" (Job 30:19). In Daniel's case, it was a way of identifying with the whole of Judah. He is going to plead for the people, confessing the sin of the nation, and seeking for mercy from the Lord. Thus he fasts from food, covers himself with sackcloth, and sits in ashes. He is going to make a confession, and such a thing must not be accompanied by any element of pride or casualness.

WHY DID DANIEL DO THIS?

One might suppose that the awareness of the coming conclusion of the Babylonian captivity would have sparked joy in the prophet. God had promised an end to the captivity. Was that not enough? Is there really any need for prayer in such a matter?

Indeed there is! Here is a principle of the Kingdom that naive and simplistic souls cannot see. What God has promised must still be pursued. This principle was articulated by God Himself through the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel prophesied during the Babylonian captivity. The heart of the people had been weighed down, and many, no doubt, were living in utter despair. Great numbers of them had only known life in Babylon, with few recollections of the personal enjoyment of Divine benefits. Therefore, the Lord spoke through Ezekiel, telling the people what He was going to do. In the interest of His own great name, this is what He would do. These promises are found in the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel.

- He would be sanctified in His people before the eyes of the heathen (36:23).
- He would remove them from among the heathen, gather them out of all countries, and bring them into their own land (36:24).
- He would sprinkle clean water upon them and cleanse them from all of their idols (36:25).

He would give them a new heart and a new spirit (36:26a).

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- He would remove their stony heart (36:26b).
- He would put His Spirit within them and cause them to walk in His statutes, keep His judgments, and do them (36:27).
- They would dwell in the land God gave to their fathers, be His people, and He would be their God (36:28).
- God would save them from all of their uncleannesses (36:29a).
- He would call for the corn, increase it, and lay no famine upon them (36:29b).
- He would multiply the fruit of the tree, and increase the produce of their fields (36:30).
- They would remember their evil ways and loathe themselves in their own sight (36:31).
- When they had been cleansed, God would cause them to dwell in the cities, and the wastes would be built (36:33).
- The desolate land would again be tilled (36:34).
- The land that was desolate would become like the garden of Eden, and waste, desolate, and ruined cities would be fenced and again inhabited (36:35).
- The heathen would know that the Lord builds the ruined places, and plants that which was desolate (36:36).

It is difficult to imagine a more thorough range of promises. How would they all come to pass? Would they simply suddenly appear to the surprise of everyone? It seems as though many are conducting their lives as though that is how the Lord works. It is at this point that the Lord revealed the principle of which I speak. “Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them ; I will increase them with men like a flock” (36:37). Other versions read, “I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them,” NKJV “This also I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them,” NIV “The children of Israel will again make prayer to me for this , that I may do it for them,” BBE “Yet for this will I be sought by the house of Israel , to establish them,” Septuagint “As a further mark of favor, I shall let myself be consulted by the House of Israel ,” NJB and “I am ready to hear Israel's prayers for these blessings .” NLT

One of the reasons God speaks of what He going to do is in order to provoke prayers and supplications among His people – to do what He has promised to do. This is a most glorious Divine quality, bringing His people into participation with His purposes. Thus Daniel now acts in harmony with the way in which God has revealed that He works. He does not take the end of the Babylonian captivity for granted, but sets his face toward God, seeking to plead for the fulfillment of His promise humbly and fervently.

A PRESENT DAY LIABILITY

Our day is marked by a serious deficiency in the knowledge of the text of Scripture. Few professing Christians have even read the Bible, and this has put them at a great disadvantage. Of necessity, such people are driven by human agendas, whether their own or that of some other man or institution. They do not know what God has

promised, and therefore come short of seeking such benefits.

When the promises of God are read or heard, they are designed to spark a personal interest in their fulfillment. That spark will, if not quenched, ignite a fire within in that will erupt in prayer and supplication. One of the ways of the Lord is to allow His people to ask for the very things He has promised. The Psalmist put it this way. “And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Psa 50:15). This is a picture of the heavenly economy into which men are called by faith.

One might object to this, saying God has already promised to be with us, and does not need to be reminded by us to do so. As it is written, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee; be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness” (Isa 41:10). Yet, the same Lord fulfills His promises as His people ask for them to be personally realized. That is His manner. Now Daniel will live out that principle with prayer and supplications.

THE GREAT AND DREADFUL GOD

“ 4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.”

Throughout a period of at least sixty-eight years, Daniel has been faithful in his prayers. Even when a law was passed against praying, he continued to pray three times a day with no attempt to conceal what he was doing (6:13). Until this time, however, specific prayers have not been recorded in this book. There is a reference in the second chapter to Daniel and his three colleagues desiring “mercies of the God of heaven” (Dan 2:18), to have the dream of Nebuchadnezzar revealed.

Now that a critical time has arrived, Daniel’s faithfulness in prayer will pay large dividends. Those who wait for a crisis to arise before they pray will find it difficult to pray intelligently and with faith and power. If God is not our mainstay in the normalities of life, it is not likely that we will experience great mercies from Him in the times of crisis.

THE LORD MY GOD

“And I prayed unto the LORD my God . . .” The word “LORD” (in capital letters) means “Jehovah,” or “the self-Existent or Eternal.” This is the name by which God revealed Himself under the Old Covenant. This depicted the expanded manner in which He revealed Himself to those under that First Covenant. Thus God said to Moses, “And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty , but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them ” (Ex 6:3).

“LORD” or “Jehovah”

It is interesting that only the King James Version and American Standard Version translate the word “Jehovah” in the Exodus text. All of the other versions read “LORD.” In the KJV, “Jehovah” is also found in Psalm

83:18, and Isaiah 12:2 and 26:4. The American Standard Version consistently translates the word “Jehovah” – an astounding 6.773 times! No other standard version of Scripture contains the word “Jehovah” (NKJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, RSV, NLT).

In the days of Seth, the offspring of Adam and Eve through whom the Messiah would come, men began to call upon “the LORD” (Jehovah (Gen 4:26).

Under the Old Covenant, God revealed Himself as “the LORD” in order to emphasize that He was a covenant-keeping God . Thus, the accent was placed upon His eternity.

Therefore, in saying “the LORD my God,” Daniel is saying, “I am coming to the covenant-keeping and faithful One, whom I have chosen to worship and serve. This is the God I choose to honor and serve, the One who stands by His Word and keeps His covenant.”

MADE MY CONFESSION

“. . . and made my confession . . .” The word “confess” literally means to cast down, or place before someone. Here the word means Daniel is going to place before the Lord, with full consciousness of His Person, the praise of God as well as the sins of the people. He makes no attempt to hide what he has seen in his people, nor does he conceal what he sees of God.

There is a sort of transparency in what he will say. It will not be laden with seemingly plausible explanations, as though national sins could be explained at all. He is able to do this because God Himself is his focus, and that focus does not allow for pretense in any other area.

It is important to note that when we have been under the chastening rod of God, and go to Him for mercy and relief, it is imperative that we acknowledge the error of our ways. When David besought the Lord for mercy following his sin with Bethsheba, he prayed, “I acknowledge my transgression , and my sin is ever before me” (Psa 51:3). In the days of Jeremiah, God said to Israel, “ Only acknowledge thine iniquity , that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed My voice, saith the LORD” (Jer 3:13).

Lest someone think this to be a light thing, God said through Hosea, “I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence , and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early” (Hosea 5:15). Those who seek Divine favor must not take sin lightly. God does not view it with toleration, and neither can we!

GREAT AND DREADFUL

“. . . and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God . . .” Other versions read, “great and awesome God,” NKJV/ NASB/NIV “great and terrible God,” RSV “great God, greatly to be feared,” BBE and “great and wonderful.” Septuagint

As you peruse Scripture, you will soon find that no other persons can be addressed as the Father and the Son. Such marvelous things cannot be said of either man or angel. These are Divine qualities that are inexorably linked to

the “eternal God” (Deut 33:27). They are not resident in anyone who was created. Notice the definite article: “THE great, and dreadful God.” These are exclusively Divine qualities.

“Great” includes the concepts of high, mighty, exceeding, and age . Nothing about God is demeaning, weak, diminishing, or immature. It makes no difference what He is compared to, He is “greater.” “God is great” (Job 36:26), and is consequently “greatly to be praised” (Psa 96:4). In the earth, politicians, entertainers, athletes, religious personalities, and money merchants regularly receive more praise than God. The condition is inexcusable!

“Dreadful,” or “terrible,” includes the idea of causing fear and dread in those opposed to Him, and reverence and awe among those who trust Him. No one who has ever knowingly confronted God was passive or indifferent about it. In Scripture, the people of God were told not to be afraid of their enemies, for “the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible” (Deu 7:21). That is, when God makes Himself known, He strikes such terror into the hearts of His enemies, they become helpless. Those who imagine the glorified Christ will be opposed by the army of an Antichrist have conveniently overlooked this aspect of the Divine nature. Such a notion is utterly foolish.

KEEPING COVENANT AND MERCY

“ . . . keeping the covenant and mercy . . . ” Other versions read, “keeping His covenant,” NKJV/NASB/NIV This is not referring to the covenant made at Sinai, but the one made with Abraham (Gen 17:2-9). The covenant at Sinai was broken by the people (Jer 31:32). The one made with Abraham was not broken, and Daniel knew it.

Here, a strong appeal is made to the faithfulness of God. Unlike some contemporary theologians, Daniel refused to think of God as abandoning the commitments made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Prior to his death, when Moses spoke to the people, he referred to God as “the faithful God which keepeth covenant and mercy” (Deut 7:9). These are the exact words of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple: “who keepest covenant and mercy ” (1 Kgs 8:23). When Nehemiah first prayed to God at the beginning of his book, he said “O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy ” (Neh 1:5). Following the rebuilding of the wall, when the people of Nehemiah’s day prayed they said, “Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy ” (Neh 9:32). When Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, uttered his magnificent praise, he said God was setting out “To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant ” (Luke 1:72). God’s mercy and God’s covenant are key factors in prayer.

Faith reckons on the faithfulness of God, appealing to what He has promised to do. It is to be understood that such prayers are always accompanied with a firm resolve to serve the Lord and seek His favor, just as our text confirms.

LOVING GOD AND KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS

“ . . . to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments.” Other versions read, “who keeps His covenant of love with all who love Him and obey his commands” (Dan 9:4).

Here is another appeal to the nature of God. Not only is He a great, eternal, faithful God, keeping His covenant, He does so toward those who love Him” and “keep His commandments.” Right here God defines the borders of His dealings with men. God is faithful to fulfill His good promises only to those who love Him and obey His commands. Thus Paul writes, “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God ” (1 Cor 7:19).

A Thorny Text

There is text in Scripture that has been used to propagate much erroneous teaching. “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:13). Thus men reason that those in Christ can never come short of the goodness of God. But this is not at all what Paul is saying. Note, the text does not say, “If we believe not, yet He will remain faithful to US.” His faithfulness is to Himself, for He cannot deny “Himself.”

God has revealed the destiny of those who “believe not.” Jesus said, “If ye believe not that I am He, ye will die in your sins” (John 8:24). Satan, who is “the god of this world,” has “blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2 Cor 4:4). “Unbelievers” will have their part “in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rev 21:8). The one who “believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16), is “condemned already” (John 3:18), and “the wrath of God abideth on Him” (John 3:36). For God, therefore, to bless such people, keeping their salvation secure, would require that He “deny Himself,” and He cannot do that!

Consider what those who affirm “God cannot deny Himself” means He can never do anything but save those who once believed, though now they “believe not.” Behold, what have they said! They have affirmed, “**If we are erratic, God will also be unpredictable.**” Even Daniel, living prior to the fuller disclosure of the purpose of God, knew this was not true.

The truth Daniel here acknowledges (that God keeps covenant and mercy with those who love Him and keep His commandments) has been confirmed in Divine history. What will men do with the remarkable amount of evidence that attests to the truth of this statement – a description of the unchangeable nature of God?

- Adam and Eve were thrust from the Garden because they did not keep His solitary commandment (Gen 3:24).
- Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land because he infringed a single commandment (Num 20:12).
- Over six hundred thousand people who were delivered from Egypt were forbidden to enter the promised land because they did not keep God’s commandments (Josh 5:6).
- King Saul was deposed from the throne upon which God had placed him because He did not keep God’s commandments (1 Sam 15:26).
- The Babylonian captivity was brought about because Israel did not keep the commandments of God (Jer 25:12).

Let no one question that God is only committed to keep His covenant and show mercy to those possessing a love for Him, and who maintain their hold on His commandments. God has never said or acted in contradiction of this reality. Those who have failed to see Him in this way are simply blind to who He really is.

WE HAVE SINNED

“ 5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments.”

Like a true intercessor, Daniel now identifies with the people for whom he prays. He has not been noted for rebellion, but they have. He has not lived in transgression, but they have. Yet, because he belongs to the nation, and because he seeks their betterment, he takes their sin, as it was, upon himself. He prays as David did (Psa 106:6), and Nehemiah as well (Neh 1:6), confessing for the people, “we have sinned!”

It is of particular importance that we behold how the waywardness of Judah is described. No appeal is made to emotional or physiological disorders. There is no appeal to difficult circumstances, or the failure of others to help them. One of the ways to recover from spiritual setbacks, disobedience, drawing back, etc., is simply to call sin what it really is.

SIN AND INIQUITY

“ We have sinned, and have committed iniquity . . . ”

It may all seem unnecessary, but sin must be acknowledged. It is only “IF we confess our sins” that God “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Here is something that Adam and Eve are never recorded as saying , although I do not doubt such an acknowledgment was made. Even men like Pharaoh and Balaam said “I have sinned” (Ex 9:27; 10:16; Num 22:34). Other individuals who made this confession include Achan (Josh 7:20), king Saul (1 Sam 15:24), David (2 Sam 12:13), Judas (Matt 27:4), and the prodigal son (Lk 15:18). Not all of them profited from their confession because their hearts were not right with God. Such confessions must be accompanied by faith and a resolve to forsake the path of disobedience.

To say “we have sinned” is an acknowledgment of going astray, missing the mark, and being headed in the wrong direction. To have “committed iniquity” is to deliberately corrupt life through self-will, living for self rather than for God, and seeking the gratification of corrupt desires rather than seeking to please God.

The blame for sin belongs with man, and Daniel knows it. In this expression he acknowledges his people have left the path on which they were placed, and have sought their own wicked interests. The last seventy years have been spent in bondage in a strange land for that very reason. Daniel sees this and is moved to pray.

WICKEDNESS AND REBELLION

“ . . . and have done wickedly, and have rebelled . . . ”

Wickedly

These words are the prelude to recovery, and will in no wise be ignored by God. The same nature that would not allow Him to overlook their sin, will not permit Him to ignore the confession of that sin . They pray in the words of the Psalmist. “We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly” (Psa 106:6). Later, Daniel uses these words again: “ we have done wickedly ” (Dan 9:15). He does not say “We have made mistakes,” or even “We have not done right.” His confession correctly assesses their deeds

as having been “done wickedly.” The NASB version reads, “we have been wicked.” The NIV waters the words down too much by reading, “we have done wrong.”

The word “wicked” means to deliberately violate the word of the Lord. It is to willingly do something that God has condemned, and thus become condemned because of it. Righteousness is God-centered. Wickedness is self-centered. Wickedness is intentionally leaving the path of righteousness. It is sinning by choice, even when the right was known and clearly understood. Wickedness is “sinning greatly.” NLT

We live in a day when much can be gained from absorbing this text. Individuals, families, congregations, cities, and even whole countries have fallen upon hard times because of their own iniquity. It is time to return to the Lord, bringing words (Hos 14:2), as these people did.

Rebellion

Sin is never an innocent thing. Departing from the Lord does not take place inadvertently or accidentally. Rebellion, insurrection, a revolt, and an uprising against the God of heaven accompanies every departure from Him. There is resistance, stubbornness, and obstinance in rebellion.

Rebellion is of such a serious nature that it is written, “rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft” (1 Sam 15:23). In rebellion there is a certain bitterness against the Lord because His directives chaff against the soul and irritate the mind. In the notable prayer recorded in the book of Nehemiah reference is made to Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness. “And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage” (Neh 9:17). Their appointment never materialized or was effective, but it is noted to show to what extent the flesh will go to fulfill its own will.

In Jeremiah’s day some actually “taught rebellion against the Lord” (Jer 28:16). One man who is particularly named in this matter is “Shemaiah the Nehelamite . . . he hath taught rebellion against the LORD” (Jer 29:32).

Now, Daniel acknowledges this despicable trait among the people – his own people. It must have been painful for him to do this, but in his heart he knew it had to be done. This was God’s view of the people, and the prophet acquiesces in it.

DEPARTING FROM PRECEPTS AND JUDGMENTS

“ . . . even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments.” Other versions read, “even turning aside from Thy commandments and ordinances,” NASB “we have turned away from Your commands and laws,” NIV and “scorned your commands and regulations.” NLT

There are two views seen in this expression.

- First , the people, from their own viewpoint, had sinned, committed iniquity, did wickedly, and rebelled IN ORDER THAT they might depart, or turn away from the Lord’s precepts and judgments. It is not possible to ignore what God says without doing such things. That is precisely why leaving the path of Divine utterance and direction is so serious. Two particular versions emphasize this point. “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and

have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.”
WEBSTER “We have sinned, and done perversely, and done wickedly, and rebelled, to turn aside from Thy commands, and from Thy judgments.” YLT

- Second , from the evidential point of view, their departure from the Lord’s precepts and judgments CONFIRMED THEY HAD , in fact, sinned, committed iniquity, done wickedly and rebelled against the Lord. As our blessed Lord said, “For every tree is known by its own fruit.”

Precepts

Other versions read “commandments,” NASB “commands,” NIV “orders,” BBE

The word “precept” means commandments, command, mandate, or rule. Through these “precepts” the Lord directed the people how to live. Jesus referred to a “precept” when he spoke of Moses’ direction for giving a bill of divorcement. Of that law He said, “And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept ” (Mark 10:5). Also, when referring to Moses reading the Law to the people, the Spirit says, “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people” (Heb 9:19). Now Daniel acknowledges that the people had scorned those precepts, and thus departed from them – not the least of which regarded the land sabbaths. Their refusal to keep this commanded had resulted in the Babylonian captivity.

Judgments

Other versions read “ordinances,” NASB “laws,” NIV “rules,” ESV “rulings,” NJB and “regulations.” NLT

These “judgments” had to do with carrying out the Law. They covered everything from offering sacrifices for sin to how to deal with transgressors. Included were rules concerning clean and unclean foods, dealing with landmarks, observing certain feasts at specific times, honoring land sabbaths, the examination of lepers, and the likes.

Daniel now confesses the people had no care for the applications of the Law, choosing instead to do their own pleasure .

It would be refreshing, indeed, to hear of an awakening some place in our country where such candid confessions were being made. Perhaps some fasting, a book burning, and some genuine tears of contrition.

WE HAVE NOT HEARKENED

“ 6 Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the prophets, which spake in Thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”

The sin of the people had been greatly compounded because of the ministry of the holy prophets.

HEARKENING TO THE PROPHETS

The holy prophets played an indispensable role in the life of Israel. They were sent by God to speak against their sins and spark a return to the Lord. Much is made of this in the Word of God

One remarkable reference to the failure of Israel to hearken to the prophets is found in the book of Nehemiah. In this particular text, the people are praying, speaking almost identically as Daniel. “ Yet many years didst Thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by Thy spirit in Thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest Thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.” The continued existence of Israel was not, and is not today, the result of any faithfulness or worth on their part. It is strictly due to the forbearance of God and His respect for the promise given to Abraham (Gen 26:24; Rom 11:28).

When the history of a person or people is said to be “many years” of Divine “forbearance,” it is not good. Some versions use the word “patience” instead of “forebear.” I see “forbear” as a much stronger word. The meaning of “forbear” is to delay judgment, to defer wrath, and to extend the time allotted for repentance. It is much larger than the English word “patience,” which leaves the impression of tolerating, or putting up with recalcitrant behavior.

God did not thunder at them from heaven, but “testified against” them “by” His “Spirit,” which was “in His prophets.” Notice how the people of Nehemiah’s time take the matter back to God. He is the One who testified. It was His Spirit that brought the message. And, it was His prophets that delivered His words to the people.

The message of the prophets was always timely. Six times Jeremiah declares God “sent” the prophets “early, ” in plenty of time for Israel to respond and recover from their sin (Jer 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 29:29; 35:15; 44:4). Once he even says they were sent “daily” (Jer 7:25).

These faithful testimonies were not for several weeks or months, but for “many years.” The period of the Judges alone was 318 years (1368 to 1050 B.C.). The period of the Kings lasted well over 400 years (1010 to 586 B.C.). That is over 700 years of Divine forbearance! How modest is the expression: “many years.”

What About the Church?

One can only surmise the attitude of God toward the church, which has been in existence for over 2,000 years. Stern rebukes were delivered to the church for its retrogression beginning in the middle of the first century. Toward the end of the century, the Lord Jesus Himself solemnly rebuked five of His churches in the book of the Revelation. Yet, this very day, the church as a whole is in a weakened state, miserably divided, and abysmally ignorant of the Word of God.

Let no person imagine for a single moment that God is indifferent to this situation! Nor, indeed, should we be incapable of tracing many of the woes that have befallen the church directly to its own withdrawal from the Lord. Considering what has been prepared for the saints, the abundance of truth made known to them, and the indwelling Spirit, it is completely inexcusable for any degree of spiritual retardation to be found among them.

They Did Not Hearken

Now Daniel confesses the people did not hearken to the Prophets. That is, they did not pay attention to them, but ignored their solemn words. The testimony of the prophets was open and extensive – to their “kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.” Their message was not ambiguous, and was delivered in the name of the Lord. Yet the people chose to ignore what the Prophets said.

Those of Nehemiah’s time also referred to the people’s refusal to listen to God. They added, “they would not give ear.” Other versions read “would not listen,” but more is involved than that. The idea is that they would not submit their capacity to hear and understand to the Living God. They would not give Him their minds, or submit to Him their capability to hear, weigh, ponder, and respond. They did not yield their decision-making abilities to God.

The Stewardship of Capacities

The abilities to pay attention, hear, and listen with resolve are capacities that are given to every person. It is part of being created in the image of God. Everyone submits these abilities to someone. Some give them to the world: entertainers, philosophers, theologians, politicians, etc. However, if the capacity to hear and receive is not given to God, it will become the basis for condemnation.

The prayer in Nehemiah adds that the Prophets testified “against” the people. Other versions read “admonished them,” NASB “warned them,” NIV “gave witness against them,” BBE and “protested among them.” GENEVA The idea is that of repeatedly confronting the people with their sin – over and over. They were out of synch with the God of heaven, and He would not allow them to continue without facing them with their transgression. It should be alarming to any believer to hear of God testifying “against ” a people or an individual! For God to speak “against” someone is a matter of the greatest gravity. Those who imagine God never says anything bad about anyone will certainly have great difficulty with this text.

Jeremiah told the people, “The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city” (Jer 26:12). Ezekiel was told to “prophesy against” Israel (Ezek 4:6; 6:2; 11:4; 13:2; 21:2; 34:2). Even before they entered the land, Moses testified against the people. “I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed ” (Deu 4:26).

To “testify against” relates to part of Jeremiah’s commission: “to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down” (Jer 1:10). It is confronting people with their sin and confirming their nearness to Divine judgment.

You may recall that Jesus told three different churches that He had “somewhat against” them (Ephesus, Pergamos, and Thyatira: Rev 2:4,14,20). Although this is an often neglected ministry in our day, it is God’s manner to speak against those who insist on forgetting Him and going against His Word.

Why the Prophets Spoke

God’s purpose for speaking against His people was not merely to give vent to His anger – a tendency that is found in man. Rather, it was “bring them back” to His Law (Neh 9:29). NKJV It was to bring them back to a point where they thought first of God and His Word, for in order to sin, one must forget both God and His Word . It is written that Israel “forgot the Lord their God” (Judges 3:7). They also “forgot His works, and His wonders that He had

showed them” (Psa 78:11).

How vividly God spoke through Hosea about this matter. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hosea 4:6). The “lack of knowledge” among the people was not due to the lack of any reminders on God’s part! They chose to forget His Law in preference of their own evil ways.

God testified “against” the fathers in order to awaken them to the due consideration of His Law. He did this because He prefers mercy to judgment. Thus we read, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7). Surely there are valuable things to be learned by the church in this text – those who have been given infinitely more advantages than were ever realized under the First Covenant. Judgment begins with the house of God (1 Pet 4:17).

GOD IS RIGHTEOUS

“ 7 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 hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee. 8 O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee.”

RIGHTEOUSNESS BELONGS TO GOD

“O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee . . .” Other versions read, “Lord, you are righteous,” NIV “Righteousness is on your side, O Lord,” NRSV “Thine, O Lord, is the righteousness,” DARBY and “Lord, You are in the right.” NLT

One of the measures of a person is how they respond to the chastening hand of the Lord. Solemnly we are told, “Despise thou not the chastening of the Lord” (Job 5:17; Prov 3:11; Heb 12:5). I fear that such unlawful responses have been dignified by the wave of psychological babble that is filling the church these days. Those who say “God can handle your anger,” or “It is all right to be angry with God,” are leading people astray, and contributing to the hardness of their hearts. Righteousness belongs to God, even if He sends Nebuchadnezzar against them to carry them away to a seventy-year captivity in a heathen land.

Daniel does not respond with anger toward God, as some unthinking people do in our day. He does not cry out “Why, Lord?” Instead, he confesses the righteousness of God in punishing the people for their iniquity. Moses was right in his song, and the people know it: “a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He” (Deut 32:4). God Himself declares, “there is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside Me” (Isa 45:21). Satan is “the god of this world” (2 Cor 4:4), but he is in no way “just,” not even with his own children. Daniel, therefore, refuses to credit God with wrong doing, overlooking them, giving the enemy too much power, or punishing them too

long.

Daniel reasons as their father Abraham did: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen 18:25). They knew “the Lord is righteous in all of His ways” (Psa 145:17), even when they are against His people.

In this text “right,” or “righteousness,” does not mean the response of God conforms to some moral code. Rather, it is “right” because in God’s dealings with Israel He has been faithful to Himself – faithful to His own unchangeable nature.

The Divine Nature Declared

The Lord has plainly declared His nature. He is not only abundant in goodness and truth, gracious, merciful, and longsuffering (Ex 34:6b). He not only keeps mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgressions, and sin (Ex 34:7a). He also “will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (Ex 34:7).

He will not gloss sin, or sweep it under the rug. His nature will not allow Him to overlook sin, and it will not forbid Him to show mercy on those who call out to Him! But with Daniel, this is not a cold and calculating theology. He has connected this truth with the circumstance of the people. He sees that God has conducted Himself toward them in strict keeping with His own nature. This is a most marvelous perception!

All of this presumes a considerable knowledge of God. Those who are fundamentally ignorant of God cannot draw conclusions like this. They do not have the faintest idea if whether the things that have occurred to them are right or wrong. They cannot pray properly because of this, nor can they correctly assess their lives.

CONFUSION OF FACES

“ . . . but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day . . . ” Other versions read, “shame of face,” NKJV “open shame,” NASB “covered with shame,” NIV and “the look of shame.” NJB

The expression “confusion of face” also occurs in Ezra, where a similar confession is made . “Since the days of our fathers have we been in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face , as it is this day” (Ezra 9:7). David put the thoughts of “confusion” and “shame” together in the 44 th Psalm. “My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me” (Psa 44:15).

The idea conveyed in this phrase is that of a deep and profound shame that is displayed in the countenance . All confidence has been flushed from the individual, and no strength remains in them. A sense of their wrongness and transgression has permeated their entire being. It is a state similar to that of Cain, when his countenance was “fallen” (Gen 4:6). Note , Daniel says this condition belongs to them, while righteousness belongs to God. The people were wrong, and Daniel sees it. That is another reason why he is fasting with sackcloth and ashes.

A SCATTERED PEOPLE

“ . . . 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 hast driven them . . . ”

The appropriateness of “shame of face ” belongs to the people as a whole, not just the ones in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had left some people in Judah, appointing Gedaliah to be over them (2 Kgs 25:22). Those people may have been allowed to remain in the land, but shame of face belong to them as well! No matter where the people were located, whether in Judah, the city of Jerusalem, any place throughout all Israel, Babylon, or other countries, all of them had reason to be ashamed and disfigured in their countenance. “Confusion of face” belonged to them.

BECAUSE OF TRESPASSES

“O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee .”

And why is it that “confusion of face” belong to the whole of the people? Was it just that God has dealt harshly toward them? Indeed, it is not. It is because of they “sinned against” God personally. Daniel is speaking as David did when he was awakened with a sense of guilt “Against Thee, Thee only , have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest” (Psa 51:4).

Sin must be seen in this light. It is not simply doing something that is wrong – or going beyond an established boundary. Sin proceeds from the carnal mind which is “enmity against God” (Rom 8:7) . It is an aggressive attack upon God’s person, even though it is utterly futile. Those who sin against God may appear to be getting by with it. However, an ultimate confrontation looms on the horizon of time – a time that has been appointed by God. At that time it will be made quire clear that the commandments of the Lord were right, and that all infractions of them were acts of hostility against Him. He will overcome!

GOD’S MERCY AND FORGIVENESS

“ 9 To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him.”

Unbelief would have despaired over the circumstances Daniel has confessed. Such deplorable conditions appear utterly hopeless to the carnal mind. But Daniel sees beyond the circumstances, even though they were just, and beholds God Himself. A ray of hope is seen by the Prophet, and he takes hold of it by faith.

MERCIES AND FORGIVENESS

“To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses . . .” Other versions read, “compassion and forgiveness,” NASB “God is merciful and forgiving,” NIV and “to have mercy and to pardon” NJB

By saying “mercies” and “forgiveness” belong to the Lord, Daniel is confessing the Lord not only has the ability to confer these upon men, but that He is inclined to do so. In revealing Himself to Moses, the Lord declared His Person by saying, “And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Ex 34:7). That is God’s nature, and Daniel is depending on the presence of those qualities in Him.

The prayer of Nehemiah’s people has some striking resemblances to this expression: “. . . but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness . . . Nevertheless for thy great mercies’ sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God” (Neh 9:17,31). Daniel is now appealing to that mercy and Divine desire to forgive.

Great Mercy

God not only has mercy, He has “ great mercy.” Thus we read, “The Lord is longsuffering, and of GREAT mercy” (Num 14:18). When God revealed His glory to Moses,, the very first trait He accented was “merciful” (Ex 34:6).

“Merciful ”means filled with mercy. “Great mercy” accents the abundance of mercy. We are told that God is “plenteous in mercy” (Psa 86:15), and “of great mercy” (Psa 145:8). David confessed, “The LORD is gracious, and FULL of compassion; slow to anger, and of GREAT mercy” (Psa 145:8). When Elizabeth gave birth to John the Baptist, her neighbors and cousins heard “how the Lord had showed GREAT mercy upon her” (Lk 1:58).

Mercy is not an easy word to define. It is more like a crop than a single fruit, and a storehouse than an individual commodity. It includes the ideas of beauty, favor, goodness, kindness, and pity. STRONGS Beauty is involved because it throws a spotlight on God’s comeliness (Isa 33:17). Favor accents His inclination to lovingly bless and improve (Psa 30:5). Goodness makes known how He brings advantage, helps, and sustains (Num 10:32). Kindness emphasizes His tenderness and gentleness (Isa 54:8). Pity involves stooping to help the afflicted, and being touched with their condition (Isa 63:9).

God is too little known for His great mercy. Therefore, He has so blessed His people, being tolerant of their waywardness, in order to make His mercy the better known . That is something of what is involved in the expression, “for Thy great mercies’ sake.” In His approach to Israel He was making known how merciful He is. Now, Daniel has seen this. In confessing it, He is seeking for the mercy of God to be upon the people in their full recovery.

If one wanted to make an appeal to the Law itself, and to the strict adjudication of what is right and just, a case could be made for utterly destroying Israel. In fact, many within the church think this is what God actually did following Israel’s rejection of Christ. Unlike them, the people in our text no doubt knew of the many expressions of God on this subject. Prior to the Babylonian captivity God said through Jeremiah, “For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end ” (Jer 4:27). Again, in judgment God said, “Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy; but make not a full end . . . Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you ” (Jer 5:10,18).

It is no wonder that the Lamentator cried out, “It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not” (Lam 3:22). That is precisely why Ezekiel prophesied, “Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant that shall be brought forth, both sons and daughters” (Ezek 14:22). And again, Isaiah acknowledged that God had not utterly destroyed the people: “Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah” (Isa 1:9).

God said He would “utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven” (Exo 17:14). But He did not do so with Israel. In fact, after promising He would make a New Covenant with Judah and Israel, He pledged, “Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD” (Jer 31:26-37). Daniel now confesses that in doing this, God was considering His own great mercy!

A GRACIOUS GOD. The attitudes and works of God are supported by His Person. He did not “utterly consume” Israel because He is gracious. In the Law, God made a point of this by saying, “I am gracious!” (Ex 22:27). The word “gracious” involves activity, and is more than a mere attribute. It means God is inclined to stoop to lift, help, and recover – like the good Samaritan. He is disposed to be kind, and to lavish His love upon men – a love that brings benefits and advantages that cannot otherwise be obtained.

A MERCIFUL GOD. “Gracious” and “merciful” are not synonymous words. Whereas the word “gracious” emphasizes the DOING of good, the word “merciful” emphasizes compassion. Love moves God to be gracious, His great compassion constrains Him to be merciful, pitiful, and forbearing. God has affirmed He is “merciful” (Ex 34:6). Moses told the people God would not forsake or destroy them because “God is a merciful God” (Deut 4:31).

THOUGH WE HAVE REBELLED

“ . . . though we have rebelled against Him.” The survival of the people was not owing to their toughness, or to any strategy they had developed for surviving in a foreign country. The presence of rebellion in them had robbed them of any wisdom or cunning. The fact of the matter was that God has graciously sustained them, going no further in the chastising of them than was necessary.

It is one thing to faint under the chastening hand of the Lord. It is quite another to view a remnant of people as evidence of the great mercy of God, and a reason to seek His forgiveness. It seems to me that there is room for a lot of this kind of preaching among God’s people.

NOT OBEYING AND THE CURSE

“ 10 Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. 11 Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey Thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.”

Daniel continues with his confession, declaring the completeness of their disobedience and rebellion against God. He is not, however, complaining, but is rather acknowledging the need the people have of mercy and forgiveness. His understanding of God is what compels him to pray in this manner. After all, there were times when they rallied behind the Judges, and some of the kings as well. However, any such obedience was the exception, not the rule – and obedience that is the exception does not count with God.

Those who would dare to live sporadically before the Lord, with occasional efforts to obey, and an effort to not be too bad, are in for a rude awakening. Such fits and starts are not even received by God. In God's assessment of Israel He ignored the infrequent peaks of goodness in their history. He said, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom 10:21). Moses said, "Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you" (Deu 9:24). Daniel now prays from that perspective.

WALKING IN HIS LAWS

"Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets . . ."

Obedience is not a step, or a series of steps. It is not a mere routine. Technically, the Jews did keep some of the feast days and other sundry laws. As astute Jew could probably have sited a number of obedient deeds found in the history of Israel.

Note how Daniel speaks of obeying the voice of the Lord: "to walk in His laws." In other words, they did not live within the framework of "His laws." In their hearts, and in their deeds as well, they conducted their lives without regard for what God had commanded them.

But Daniel adds one other interesting thing. He does not refer to God's laws given at Sinai, but the ones "He set before us by His servants the prophets." They were the same laws, to be sure. However, the prophets applied "His laws," bringing them to bear upon specific situations. Some examples should serve to establish this point.

- "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? (Isa 58:6-7).
- "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8).
- "But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, and hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hath defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath come near to a menstruous woman, and hath not oppressed any, but hath restored to the debtor his pledge, hath spoiled none by violence, hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment; he that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase, that hath withdrawn his hand from iniquity, hath executed true judgment between man and man, hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezek 18:5-9).

The prophets placed God's Law before the people in a practical way, showing at what points they had failed, and what the Lord really required of them. But the people disdained the prophets. God regarded this disdain to be against Himself personally. He does not charge them with simply not listening to the prophets, but with not walking in His laws. Whoever is sent by God to the people is to be regarded the messenger of the Lord Himself.

ALL ISRAEL HAVE TRANSGRESSED

“Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey Thy voice . . .”

The sin of Israel was unanimous. They “all” transgressed, broke, or violated the Law of God. They did so collectively, as a group.

While sin is personal, it is not confined to the individual alone. Whole bodies of people can sin together as Israel did. The church in Ephesus sinned together, leaving their “first love” (Rev 2:4). The church in Pergamos sinned together, tolerating some among them who held to the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitanes (Rev 2:14). There are still churches that are joined in their disobedience. They are in the throes of spiritual death together, and they must repent together.

THE OATH THAT IS WRITTEN

“ . . . therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against Him.”

The reprehensible conduct of “all Israel” has brought down the wrath of God – a God that is longsuffering, merciful, and given to forgiveness.

The words employed by Daniel are most arresting: “therefore the curse is poured upon us, AND the oath that is written.” Other versions read, “curses and sworn judgments,” NIV “the curse has been let loose on us , and the oath recorded in the law of Moses,” BBE “the malediction, and the curse, which is written in the book of Moses, the servant of God, is fallen upon us ,” DOUAY and “the curse and imprecation written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have come pouring down on us.” NJB

The Lord had been quite clear about the penalty for failing to walk in his laws. However, the people had not taken Him or His prophets seriously, and thus the windows of heaven were open, but not to bless them. Some of the curses, together with the oath of the Law, that were poured out upon them are mentioned in the 26 th chapter of Leviticus. Here is a sampling of those strong incentives.

- “I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that shall waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you shall sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies shall eat it up” (Lev 26:16).
- “And I will set My face against you so that you shall be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when no one is pursuing you” (Lev 26:17).
- “If also after these things, you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will also break down your pride of power; I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze” (Lev 26:18-19).
- “And your strength shall be spent uselessly, for your land shall not yield its produce and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit” (Lev 26:20).

“If then, you act with hostility against Me and are unwilling to obey Me, I will increase the plague on you seven

- times according to your sins. And I will let loose among you the beasts of the field, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your cattle and reduce your number so that your roads lie deserted” (Lev 26:21-22).
- “And if by these things you are not turned to Me, but act with hostility against Me, then I will act with hostility against you; and I, even I, will strike you seven times for your sins. 'I will also bring upon you a sword which will execute vengeance for the covenant; and when you gather together into your cities, I will send pestilence among you, so that you shall be delivered into enemy hands” (Lev 26:23-25).
- “When I break your staff of bread, ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread in rationed amounts, so that you will eat and not be satisfied” (Lev 26:26)
- “Yet if in spite of this, you do not obey Me, but act with hostility against Me, then I will act with wrathful hostility against you; and I, even I, will punish you seven times for your sins. 'Further, you shall eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters you shall eat” (Lev 26:29)

Many of the details of the Babylonian captivity are not spelled out in Scripture. However, it is evident from the nature and content of Daniel’s prayer that the people paid a tremendous penalty for their willing waywardness. It should be evident to us that God’s nature does not allow Him to be tolerant of willing sin.

CONCLUSION

There are certainly some significant things to be learned from this text. For the sake of brevity, I will only give three of them.

First , it is imperative that we see the Lord’s hostility against sin – particularly when it is found among those to whom He has revealed many things, and to whom He has sent many messengers. The nature of God has not changed. He is no more tolerant of sin today than He has ever been. I realize that no small number of false doctrines have been concocted by men to modify the saints view of sin. Any teaching that trends to make sin less serious than it really is, is not of God. God “cursed” Jesus because of sin (Gal 3:13), making Him to “be sin for us” (2 Cor 5:21). If He did this to His only begotten Son when the sins of others were placed upon Him, what will be the lot of those who have chosen to live in sin, all the while ignoring the Savior?

Second , sin must be repented of, and the mercy of the Lord diligently sought. Let us have done with any glossing of sin, or assigning its reality to any source other than rebellion against the Lord. The church must provide an environment where the conviction of sin can become a reality, and the confession of it encouraged . This is particularly true of public sins.

Third , when it becomes apparent that something that God has promised is about to take place, it is time to seek the Lord. We must steadfastly resist any tendency to think “Whatever will be will be!” Daniel saw the captivity was coming to a close, and set His face toward the Lord. He acknowledged the sin and unworthiness of the people, pleading for the mercy of the Lord. He did not rest in a time table, even though such a table had been revealed.

Rather, He trusted in the Lord to respond to a plea for mercy.

We are living in a time when this kind of prayer is most appropriate. We are in a nation that is rapidly descending into the quagmire of transgression, even though it has worn the name of Christ, and claimed to trust in God. Let no man think for one moment that such affirmations are taken lightly in heaven.

We are also confronted with a church that is miserably divided, with differing and conflicting doctrines, and dominated by lukewarmness and carnality. It may very well be that we are about to witness the conclusion of the “fulness of the Gentiles,” the time when “the full number of the Gentiles has come in” NIV (Rom 11:25). Jesus spoke of a period he defined as “the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk 21:24). Those who behold indications of this, ought to give themselves to prayer, seeking the mercy of the Lord.

As Amos said, “it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant” (Amos 5:15). How appropriate Hosea’s words is here. “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you” (Hosea 10:12).

The Prophecy of Daniel

DANIEL'S INTERCESSORY PRAYER, #2

Lesson # 28

INTRODUCTION

Having understood through the writings of Jeremiah that the Babylonian captivity was about to conclude, Daniel has aggressively given his “attention to the Lord God to seek Him.” NASB He does so through prayer, fasting, sackcloth, and ashes – in deep humility and contrition. This is not an effort to meet some criterion, of fulfill a demand. Rather, it is the result of his insight and understanding. He has seen God as He really is, and that has cast light upon the nation to which Daniel belongs. His actions have been dictated by his awareness of God, which has been produced by his faith.

PROBABLY ALONE

There is no evidence that any real awakening had occurred to the captives of Judah while they were in the Babylonian captivity – at least no point is made of it. Notwithstanding, Daniel, through his study of the Scriptures, has calculated that the captivity is coming to a close. At least sixty-eight years within the confines of heathen Babylon had not dulled the perception of this man of God. He was somewhere between eighty-one (if Daniel was captured when thirteen) and eighty-six (if Daniel was eighteen when captured) at the time of this prayer – and still his heart was tender and his mind keen.

I am going to assume that Daniel was relatively alone at this time. We know that at the first, when the lives of the wise men of Babylon were threatened, Daniel conferred with his three associates, “Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah” (Dan 2:17). However, we have no record of anything like that taking place at the time of this text.

Daniel, however, has seen something that has moved him to come before God in the behalf of his people. He does not go on a crusade to awaken his fellow countrymen. Rather, he engages in an effort to move God.

A PRINCIPLE TO BE SEEN

There is a principle to be seen here, and it is confirmed throughout Scripture. Those who perceive the real circumstances are the ones called to address them. When Nehemiah perceived the real circumstances of Judah, Jerusalem, and the walls, he set out to do something about it. When Paul was moved with the gross idolatry in Athens, he engaged in an God-blessed initiative to address it. When David saw the truth of Goliath, he leaped forward to confidently engage him in battle. When Elijah saw the people of God halting between two opinions, he stepped in to rally them toward God.

Daniel has seen something of great significance – the end of one era, and the beginning of another. He does not run through the streets trying to gather the people together for prayer. Rather, by faith, he enters into the activity himself. His understanding was actually a call from God.

I understand this cannot be formulated into a rigid code, and that is not my purpose for bringing it to your attention. However, as saints of the most high God, you should be sensitive to the responsibility of spiritual vision. When you correctly see circumstances about you, and they constitute a burden to you, you are probably being called by God to be used to address them. Be strong in faith, and confidently move into His will.

THE PREVALENCE OF DEITY

Daniel’s prayer has a very apparent accent upon Deity. Note the references to God in this prayer – they reveal the nature of “prayer of a righteous man” (James 5:16).

- O Lord 4
 - the great and dreadful God 4
 - keeping covenant and mercy 4
 - love Him 4
 - His commandments 4
 - Thy precepts 5
 - Thy judgments 5
 - Thy servants the Prophets 6
 - Thy name 6
 - O Lord 7
 - righteousness belongeth to Thee 7
 - Thou hast driven them 7
 - trespassed against Thee 7
 - O Lord 8
 - sinned against Thee 8
 - the Lord our God 9
 - belong mercies and forgivenesses 9
 - rebelled against Him 9
 - the voice of the Lord 10
 - our God 10
 - His laws 10
 - He set before us 10
 - His servants the prophets 10
-
- Thy law 11
 - Thy voice 11
 - servant of God 11
 - sinned against Him 11
-
- He hath confirmed 12
 - His words 12
 - He spake 12
 - Thy truth 13
 - the LORD watched 14
 - The Lord brought it upon us 14
 - The Lord our God is righteous 14
 - His works 14
 - His voice 14
 - Lord our God 15
 - Thy people 15
 - hast gotten Thee renown 15
 - Thy righteousness 16
 - Thine anger 16
 - Thy city Jerusalem 16
 - Thy holy mountain 16
 - Thy people 16
 - Our God 17
 - Thy servant 17
 - Thy face 17

- Thy sanctuary 17
- the Lord's sake 17
- My God 18
- Thine ear 18
- Thine eyes 18
- Thy name 18
- before Thee 18
- Thy great mercies 18
- O Lord hear 19
- O Lord forgive 19
- O Lord hearken 19
- O Lord defer not 19
- Thine own sake 19
- My God 19
- Thy city 19
- Thy people 19
- Thy name. 19

There are 64 direct references to God in this prayer : twenty seven in the first eleven verses (covered in the previous lesson), and thirty-seven in the text we are presently reviewing. You will find a similar emphasis in all of the great prayers of Scripture.

EFFECTIVE PRAYER

Effective prayer is never self-centered. Rather, it flows out of an acute consciousness of the Person of God Himself. It is that awareness that has shed light upon the circumstance, and not vice versa. Some, for example, may be tempted to think as we ponder upon the circumstance, our thoughts of God will be greatly enhanced. Thus, beginning with situations, they make an effort to reason toward God. Whatever results are realized by such an attempt will, at best, be minuscule. It is far better to begin with God and Scripture, and in that light view the circumstance. It will appear quite different than if you begin with what can be seen and felt in this world.

Although I have made frequent references to this fact, “in Thy light SHALL WE see light” (Psa 36:9). The glory of God's Person – or the awareness of His Being and will – makes everything else more plain. In Fact, there is no truly profitable understanding that is independent of the knowledge of God. Whatever value that is obtained from such knowledge is only temporary, and will tend to obscure both the Person and purpose of God.

Intellectual, moral, and spiritual darkness are always prevalent where God is not known. Men are confined to this state until God shines into their hearts with the light of the knowledge of His glory (2 Cor 4:6). There is no other way to acquire true wisdom and knowledge – the kind that leads to and instructs in the truth of God.

HE HAS CONFIRMED HIS WORD

“ 9:12 And He hath confirmed His words, which He spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.”

Daniel continues his insightful prayer. He has perceived and confessed the waywardness of his people. Now he will trace their misfortunes to the working of God Himself. That working is, he confesses, in perfect accord with what God said He would do. There are lessons to be learned here that are most needful in our time.

CONFIRMED HIS WORD

“And He hath confirmed His words, which He spake against us, and against our judges that judged us . . .” Other versions read , “You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers,” NIV “And he has given effect to his words which he said against us and against those who were our judges,” BBE and “He has carried out the threats which he made against us and the chief men who governed us.” NJB

Judgments from God are never without due warning. He is not looking for an opportunity to pour out His wrath, judge sinners, or bring calamity upon people. For those in covenant with Him, He warns through His Word, as well as His prophets. For those who are not in covenant with Him, He warns through those who do fear him (as Lot with Sodom, Gen 19:9), and His prophets (As Jonah with Nineveh, Jonah 1:2). There are even shouts of warning from the conscience, as declared with the primitive Gentile world (Rom 2:15). Now, Daniel confesses that God has confirmed “His words” in bringing judgments upon the children of Judah and Israel.

By “confirming” His words, the Lord made good on what He had declared. It is God’s nature to confirm what He has said. As it is written, “That confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers” (Isa 44:26).

A Word About Confirming the Word

It is fashionable these days for men to speak of archaeological finds, historical documents, and the likes, as “confirming” the Scriptures. By that, they mean such things attest to the truth of the Word of the Lord. However, this is not how the Holy Spirit uses the word “confirm,” nor is it a valid spiritual concept.

In Scripture, the confirmation of God's Word is its fulfillment – when it comes to pass, or when He does what He said He said He will do. Thus, the coming of Jesus was the confirmation of the promises made to the fathers (Rom 15:8). God's promise to bless Abraham's seed was "confirmed" when fulfilled to Jacob and his seed (Psa 105:10). This is also the way in which we have "a more sure word of prophecy" – a word that has been fulfilled, or has come to pass, in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:19). Thus the NRSV version reads, "So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed" (2 Pet 1:19).

This is the sense in which Daniel now prays. God's promise to judge Israel if they departed from His ways was confirmed in the Babylonian captivity and the circumstances attending it.

The Confirmation

There are such a great number of these "words" that time allows the mention of only a few of them. Note, Daniel says these words were spoken "against us, and against our judges that judged us."

Against Us

Both Moses and the Prophets spoke against Israel – Moses before they entered the promised land, and the Prophets following their entrance into the land. From their beginning as a covenanted nation, there were frequent and ample warnings concerning the result of departing from the Living God.

- **THROUGH MOSES.** "And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?" (Deu 31:17).
- **THE PROPHETS.** Through His servants the Prophets. "And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying . . . Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle . . . I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies" (2 Ki 21:10-14). Again, Through Solomon . "But if ye turn away, and forsake My statutes and My commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them; then will I pluck them up by the roots out of My land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for My name, will I cast out of My sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations" (2 Chr 7:20). Through Jeremiah. "And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave

unto them and to their fathers” (Jer 24:9-10).

Against Our Judges

The word “judges” is not confined to the period of the Judges. This word means “to judge, govern, vindicate, punish . . . to rule.” STRONGS It refers to the civil leaders of Israel , as reflected in some of the other versions: “against our rulers who ruled us,” NASB “the chief men who governed us,” NJB and “our rulers.” NLT The word “judges” accents that their rulers had led them astray by faulty judgments and decisions. Here are some of the judgments spoken against the rulers.

- “Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations , and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle” (2 Kgs 21:11-12).
- “For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers , the seers hath He covered” (Isa 29:10).
- “And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim ” (1 Ki 18:17-18).

These warnings are only a sampling of the many words God delivered to Israel concerning the penalty for their sin. Other passages include the following: Leviticus 26:33-35; Deuteronomy 28:36-55; Isaiah 5:2; 39:6-7; Jeremiah 13:19; 20:4-5; 25:2-11; 29:17-20; 32:28-29; Lamentations 1:3-5; Ezekiel 39:23-24.

BRINGING UPON US GREAT EVIL

“ . . . by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.” Other versions read, “by bringing upon us great disaster,” NKJV and “to bring on us great calamity.” NIV

“Evil,” in this case, is not moral evil, or iniquity. Rather, it is affliction, adversity, and calamity. “Great evil” is grievous and sorrowful trouble and disaster.

Does God Cause Calamity?

It is not uncommon to hear religious sophists say that God does not cause disasters or calamities to happen. The unlearned tell us they come from the devil, and not from God – evren though thre devil is under God. But all such talk only betrays a fundamental ignorance of God Himself. It is particularly inexcusable because the Lord has abundantly revealed this aspect of His nature.

- “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil (calamity NKJV) : I the LORD do all these things” (Isa 45:7).
- “So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men” (2 Sam 24:15).
- “Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech” (Judg 9:23).
- “And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it : and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite” (1 Chron 21:15).
- “So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men” (2 Sam 24:15).
- “And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them , which slew some of them” (2 Kgs 17:25).
- “And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon , and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets” (2 Kgs 24:2).
- “But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken” (Jonah 1:4).

One wonders why such foolish doctrines are taught to the people of God, affirming that calamities do not come from the Lord. This is particularly true in view of the records of the flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the scattering at Babel. If it is countered that these were not God’s people, then let men recall the judgment of Israel in the Babylonian captivity, the smiting of Ananias and Sapphira, and the solemn warnings of judgment to the churches of Asia (Rev 2:5,16, 22:23; 3:3,16). Let them remember the tempest at Sinai (Heb 12:18), and the falling of an entire generation in the wilderness (1 Cor 10:5; Heb 3:10).

There is also the testimony of Job: “What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips ” (Job 2:10).

Daniel Confesses the Truth

In his “confession,” Daniel is speaking the truth. He looks at the grief of the Babylonian captivity, in which he himself was taken captive. He knew there were numbers of people who died in the onslaught of Jerusalem (Jer 39:6, and many were taken captive (2 Kgs 24:14). The king was blinded, and his sons were killed (2 Kgs 25:7). The Temple was ravaged, and the holy vessels taken from it (2 Kgs 24:13). The city and its houses were burned, and its walls broken down (Jer 39:8).

The man of God views the Babylonian captivity, with all of the horrors and tragedies associated with it. He then confesses, “ You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster” NIV

Earlier in history, Zechariah acknowledged the same thing. “But My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath He dealt with us ” (Zech 1:6).

AN OBSERVATION

I have rarely heard any believer trace the present condition of the church to the judgment of God. However, it seems to me that we are living in a period of time in which Divine judgment has been poured out upon the church itself. The divisions within it, together with the inexcusable lack of interest in the things of God, and the presence of remarkable levels of sin, testify to this. If it is countered that the early church endured many hardships, it must also be acknowledged that when it was scattered the people went everywhere preaching the Word” (Acts 8:4). Too, sin was not dominant among those people.

It appears to me that the time has come for the professed church to acknowledge it has strayed from the Lord, thus bringing Divine judgment upon itself. Perhaps the closing of churches, that is so common in our time, is really Jesus taking away their candlestick (Rev 2:5). It is possible that the outbreak of iniquity within the church is the result of God turning it over to its own corrupt desires (Psa 81:11-12). The staggering divisions among believers may be the result of God scattering the people as He did at Babel (Gen 11:8), and with the covenanted people of Israel (Deut 30:3). O, that God would raise up a host of sensitive souls like Daniel in this generation – souls that will stand in the gap and acknowledge the true situation of the people. How sorely they are needed, in order that recovery may be realized, and God duly glorified in the church!

AS IT IS WRITTEN

“ 13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth.”

Now Daniel goes back to the Law of Moses – that is, the Law “given by Moses” (John 1:17). He will affirm that from the very beginning, even at Mount Sinai, the Lord made clear what would happen if the people departed from Him and thus failed to keep His Word. Thus he is not only acknowledging the waywardness of the people, but removing all excuses or explanations for it.

WRITTEN IN THE LAW

“As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us . . . ”

God spoke through Moses with remarkable specificity. “But if ye will not hearken unto Me , and will not do all these commandments ; and if ye shall despise My statutes , or if your soul abhor My judgments , so that ye will not do all My commandments , but that ye break My covenant : I also will do this unto you ” (Lev 26:15-16). The details of what He would do are staggering, striking fear into every humble heart.

- Appoint over them sudden terror, consumption and fever that will; waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away. 16a
- Cause them to sow seed uselessly, for their enemies would eat the fruit. 16b
- Set His face against them so they would be struck down by their enemies. 17a
- Those that hated them would rule over them. 17b
- They would flee when no one was pursuing them. 17c
- Break down their pride of power. 19a
- Make the sky like iron and the earth like brass, crushing them between. 19b
- Their strength would be spent uselessly, for their land would not yield its produce to them, nor their trees their fruit. 20
- Let loose upon them the beasts of the field that would rob them of their children, destroy their cattle, and reduce their number so their roads would be idle. 22

- God would act with hostility against them. 24
- He would bring the sword upon them, avenging His broken covenant. 25
- When they gathered into their cities, He would send a pestilence among them so they would be delivered into their enemies hand. 25
- God would break the staff of their bread, so ten women would bake in one oven and the bread would still have to be rationed. 26
- They would eat the flesh of their sons and daughters. 29
- He would destroy their high places, cut down their incense altars, and heap their remains on the remains of their idols. 30
- Lay waste their cities, make their sanctuaries desolate, and not smell their sacrificial odors. 31
- Make their land so desolate that the enemies who settled in it would be appalled. 32 (Leviticus 26)

In recapitulating the Law, Moses also spoke of the curses that would come upon them if they would “not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day.” These curses would be devastating, and the people would not be able to avoid them. The Lord said “that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.” Ponder the magnitude of them.

- They would be cursed in the city and in the field. 16
- Their basket and kneading bowl would be cursed. 17
- The fruit of their body, the fruit of their land, the increase of their herds, and the young of the flocks would be cursed. 18
- They would be cursed coming in and going out as well. 19
- In everything they set their hand to do, God would send upon them cursing, vexation, and rebuke, until they would be destroyed. 20
- He would cause pestilence to cling to them until they were consumed from the land. 21
- He would smite them with consumption, fever, inflammation, fiery heat, the sword, blight, and

mildew – which would pursue them until they perished. 22

- The heaven over them would be brass, and the earth beneath them would be iron. 23
- He would make the rain of their land powder and dust. 24
- He would cause them to be defeated by their enemies. 25
- Their carcasses would be food to all the birds of the sky and the beasts of the earth, which would not be able to be frightened away. 26
- The Lord would smite them with the boils of Egypt, tumors, the scab, and the itch, from which they would not be able to be healed. 27
- He would smite them with madness, blindness, and bewilderment of heart. 28
- They would not prosper in their ways, but would be continually robbed and oppressed. 29
- They would betroth a wife, but another man would violate her. 30a
- They would build a house, and another would live in it. 30b
- They would plant a vineyard, and another would eat of it. 30c
- Their oxen would be slaughtered before their eyes, but they would not be able to eat of it. 31a
- Their donkey would be torn away from them, and not given back. 31b
- Their sheep would be given to their enemies, and no one would be able to save them. 31c
- Their son and daughters would be given to another people, and their eyes would yearn after them, but they would not be able to do anything about it. 32
- A people they did not know would eat the produce of their ground, and the people would see nothing but oppression and crushing. 33
- They would be driven mad by what they would see. 34

- The Lord would strike them on the knees and legs with sore boils, from which they could not be healed – from the crown of their head to the soles of their feet. 35
- The Lord would bring them and their king to a nation they had never known, and there they would serve gods of wood and stone. 36
- They would become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among the people where God would scatter them. 37
- They would sow much seed into the field, but would gather little, for the locust would consume it. 38
- They would plant and cultivate vineyards, but the worm would eat them. 39
- There would be olive trees throughout their land, but they would gain no benefit, for olives would drop off. 40
- They would have sons and daughters, but they would go into captivity. 41
- Swarms of locusts would take over all of their trees and crops. 42
- The stranger among them would rise higher and higher, and they would sink lower and lower. 43
- The stranger among them would lend to them and be their head. 44

What of These Things?

And what will we say of all these warnings. Was there any lack of clarity in them? Were they not fearful to consider? Did they not confirm that God was absolutely serious in making these statements? Is there the slightest hint that they were just figures of speech, and that the people had nothing to fear?

Yet, in spite of all of these things, the people refused to hearken to the Lord or His Prophets. If behavior can be corrected by threats, these ought to have been enough.

Those who have a propensity to Law ought to memorize this section of Scripture. If you want to come to God upon the basis of doing, then ponder what the Lord requires under such an arrangement.

WE DID NOT PRAY

“ . . . yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God . . . ” Other versions read, “yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God,” NASB and “We did not entreat the favor of the Lord our God.” NRSV

There is a teaching among certain Christians that affirms it is not possible to fall away from the Lord. This postulate is based upon the supposition that God will chasten the wayward soul back from its departure, and that His chastening will be effective. It all makes sense to those who are unacquainted with the ways of the Lord.

Here is a case in point – an actual incident that took place in revealed history, and was written for our admonition. Chastening of an unprecedented order took place, and yet the people did not turn back to the Lord. Even though all manners of woes fell upon the children of Judah, yet they did not pray, seek the favor of God, or even plead for mercy.

This is not the only place the Spirit draws this to our attention. Isaiah makes a powerful point of Israel’s hard-heartedness. “Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together; the Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts . Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day” (Isa 9:11-14).

Jeremiah makes the same point. “And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD. And the LORD said unto me, The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah” (Jer 3:10-11).

Hosea also declares this condition. “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this . Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria” (Hosea 7:9-11).

Sin Hardens the Heart

We must learn from this that sin hardens the heart, making it more difficult to return to the Lord – or even ask for mercy to return to Him. There are few doctrines as dangerous as those that cause people to suppose their sin has no effect upon them or their salvation. And yet, such doctrines are remarkably popular. Even those who do not subscribe to such delusions often conduct their lives as though they were true. They dabble in sin as if nothing will ever come from it. When the Lord deals with them, their hearts have become so calloused they credit their calamities to other things, refusing to seek the Lord even though He is laying the rod of chastisement upon them.

TURNING AND UNDERSTANDING

“ . . . that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth.” Here there is not agreement in the various translations. Some say the people did not make their prayer to God, or entreat Him, IN ORDER that they “might turn from the iniquities and understand His truth.” KJV/ASV/BBE/DARBY/DOUAY/ GENEVA/SEPTUAGINT/ WEBSTER/YLT Others read that they did not turn from their iniquities in order that they might entreat the Lord: “yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord BY turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Thy truth,” NASB/NIV/NJB/NLT

In my judgment, the latter view is a wholly improper one. Elsewhere we are told that those in Christ, who have access to more than those under the Old covenant, must be “given repentance” that leads to the “acknowledging of the truth,” BEFORE they can “recover themselves out of the snare of the devil” (2 Tim 2:25-26). Men ought to know better than to imagine they can turn themselves from the iniquity that has enslaved them.

Other Testimonies

We are not shut up to reasoning on this matter. When Jeremiah besought the mercy of the Lord for His people, this is how he prayed. “ Turn Thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned ; renew our days as of old. But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us” (Lam 5:21-22).

The Psalmist also prayed in this manner. “ Turn us again , O God, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved” (Psa 80:3). And again, “ Turn us again , O God of hosts, and cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved” (Psa 80:7). And again, “ Turn us again , O LORD God of hosts, cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved” (Psa 80:19). Again he prayed, “ Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause Thine anger toward us to cease” (Psa 85:4).

Through Jeremiah the Lord said, “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn Thou me, and I shall be turned ; for Thou art the LORD my God” (Jer 31:18).

Habaukkuk prayed, “O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (Hab 3:2).

Until Turned, Men Cannot Understand

Until Israel was turned from their iniquity, they would not be able to understand the truth of God. Truth cannot be comprehended by a heart and mind that are given over to iniquity. Also, Divine involvement in the awakening of souls is confirmed in the word given concerning Lydia: “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14). Other

versions read, “The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message,” NIV “The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul.” NRSV

You cannot get a round it: men cannot turn to God independently of Him. He must be involved in anything having to do with coming to Him..

Daniel confesses that although the people drifted from God, they still did not seek the Lord for strength to recover. Their hearts did not turn upward.

THE LORD WATCHED AND BROUGHT

“ 14 Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all His works which He doeth: for we obeyed not His voice.”

Daniel now traces the woes of Israel to the righteous working of the Lord. He has been faithful to His character and His Word, for “He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:13). Daniel’s faith has brought him into accord with God, and thus he does not speculate or philosophize about the circumstances of Israel. Rather, he is God-centered in his thinking, perceiving and confessing the reason for their affliction.

WATCHED UPON THE EVIL

“Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil . . .” Other versions read, “the Lord kept the disaster in mind ,” NKJV “the Lord has kept the calamity in store ,” NASB “the Lord did not hesitate ,” NIV “the Lord has kept ready the calamity ,” RSV “the Lord has made ready the plague,” GENEVA and “Yahweh has watched for the right moment .” NJB

The “evil” of reference is the affliction, or calamity, that was the appointed outcome of sinning against the Lord. The idea conveyed by the word “watched” is this: the Lord looked for the proper time to administer the chastening of reference . We see in this the faithfulness of God’s word, whether for blessing or cursing, for deliverance or for judgment. Just as the deliverance of the people from Egypt was precisely on time, so was their judgment for refusing to honor God’s Law.

Jeremiah expressed the thought Daniel is articulating. “And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them , to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD” (Jer 32:28). And again, “Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land

of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them” (Jer 44:27).

Reasons for Waiting

There are at least two reasons why the Lord “watched” to bring evil upon the people.

First , He looked for the cup of their iniquity to be filled, thus requiring that judgment be ministered to them, and they reap what they had sowed. He did not judge them prematurely or without due cause. In this way, He proved Himself to be longsuffering, and not willing that they perish.

Second , He looked for the time that would yield the optimum benefit to the people, and glory for Himself. By dealing with them in a timely manner, both men and angels would behold His wisdom, even in the execution of His wrath. Also, after the judgment, godly men would be able to look back on the occasion and learn from the experience.

HE BROUGHT IT UPON US

“ . . . and brought it upon us . . . ” The “it” is God’s promise to send the people into captivity if they refused to do what He commanded them.

A news analyst would look at the Babylonian captivity, with its associated sufferings, and conclude that Nebuchadnezzar was superior in military strategy, and that the Jews were weak and inferior to him. Their plight would be traced to military weakness, organizational inferiority, social deficiencies, or some other socioeconomic inadequacy. The prognosticator would trace it to fate, and the military strategist to the element of surprise.

But none of this was true. With clarity of understanding, Daniel sees what has happened. God has “brought” all of these things upon them. The Lord has CAUSED all of this to happen, in strict accord with what He had said He would do. Their plight had been orchestrated by the God of heaven. He had called for Nebuchadnezzar to do His own work, and therefore referred to that king as “My servant” (Jer 27:6).

None of their disobedience had gone unnoticed, even though it had spanned a period of four hundred and ninety years. Patiently the Lord had waited for them. With staggering longsuffering He had endured their hardness of heart and disobedient spirits. But in due time, He visited their transgressions upon them, and fulfilled His word against them.

GOD IS RIGHTEOUS

“ . . . for the LORD our God is righteous in all His works which He doeth: for we obeyed not His voice.”

It is one thing to acknowledge the Lord has brought calamity and hardship upon His people. It is quite another to confess He was altogether righteous in doing so. God was righteous in bringing the people out of Egypt, and He was righteous in sending them into captivity to Babylon.

When the Jews of Nehemiah’s day made their confession, they said the same thing . “Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly” (Neh 9:33). Abraham said of God, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen 18:25) – and he was reasoning with God concerning the fiery destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Psalmist confessed, “The LORD is righteous in all His ways , and holy in all his works ” (Psa 145:17).

We Did Not Obey

Note, the reason for which Daniel declares the Lord was righteous in bringing evil upon them. It was not merely because the Lord did it – although that was reason enough. Rather, Daniel confesses the Lord was righteous in executing this lengthy and far-reaching judgment “for we obeyed not His voice.” Another version casts a little different light on the confession. “. . . yet we have not obeyed Him.” NIV That is, in spite of the judgment, we have still not obeyed – i.e., during the seventy-year captivity! However, I do not think this is the meaning of the text.

While I do not question this was the case, the statement is one of contrast . God was righteous in what He did, but they were disobedient and wicked in what they did.

Daniel’s expression is similar to the one made by the repentant people of Nehemiah’s day: “Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for Thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly ” (Neh 9:33). The confession is that of being unlike God.

BROUGHT OUT OF EGYPT

“ 15 And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought Thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten Thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.”

Daniel has stated the facts in the case, which his faith has given him to see. He has confessed that God has been righteous in all His doings, and the people have been sinful. This has been the introduction to his prayer. He has paved his approach to God with the acknowledgment of the truth, and has done so with honesty and fervency. However, Daniel is not praying only to confess to the situation. He is seeking a remedy for it. He does this because he knows the captivity is drawing to a close. He will now ask God to do what He has promised to do. As it is written, “Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Ezek 36:37).

AND NOW

“And now . . .” Daniel now begins to reason with the Lord, doing so in accord with the word of Isaiah: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa 1:18). He is going to present, or “order,” his “cause” before the Lord, and “fill” his “mouth with arguments.” Job had desired to do this when he felt as though he had no access to God: “Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me” (Job 23:3-5).

Daniel is now keenly aware of God, and his mind has been shaped by His Word. He has lived by faith, and has an understanding of God. He will now plead the case for the people.

LORD OUR GOD

“O Lord our God . . .” When Daniel first mentioned this prayer, he said he was praying to “the Lord my God” (9:4a). In this, he was emphasizing his own personal relationship to the Lord. In the prayer itself, he addressed the “Lord, the great and dreadful God” (9:4b). In this he was acknowledging the Sovereignty and greatness of the Lord. Now Daniel refers to “our God.” In this he is appealing to the One who is in covenant with Israel. Although they have proven to be unfaithful, Daniel now entreats the God who had made a covenant with them, and is faithful to that covenant.

BROUGHT THY PEOPLE FORTH

“ . . . that hast brought Thy people forth out of the land of Egypt . . . ”

Here is a strong appeal to the God who keeps “covenant and mercy with them that love Him” (9:4). In his prayer, Daniel has confessed there is no reason in the people themselves that will justify receiving mercy from the Lord. He has acknowledged, “we have sinned . . . committed iniquity . . . done wickedly . . . rebelled . . . departed from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments . . . neither have we hearkened to Thy servants the prophets . . . they have trespassed against Thee . . . we have sinned against Thee” (9:5-8). There is no cause in them to expect mercy from the Lord. If Daniel comes to God with the merit of the people in mind, everything will be hopeless.

However, the man of God has a sound mind, and he knows how to approach to the Lord. He will not move God to consider His people by citing their miserable condition, or calling to remembrance how they have reacted toward Him. Instead, He will appeal to the Lord's working with this people. In faith, he will point out how the Lord delivered this people, taking them back to their noble beginning. In so doing, he is following the same approach employed by Moses (Ex 32:11; Deut 9:26), Jeremiah (Jer 32:21), David (Psa 136:11-12), and Nehemiah (Neh 9:9-12).

A Principle to Be Seen

When an individual or a group comes before God, the most effective approach is an appeal to what He has done. Those who, like the Pharisee who prayed "with himself," cite their own achievements are not coming in a proper spirit to the Lord (Lk 18:11). Far better to come in recognition of the Lord's works and faithfulness, than to attempt to find a reason to receive goodness from Him in our own miserable achievements.

A MIGHTY HAND

" . . . with a mighty hand . . ." The deliverance of Israel from Egypt was a display of Divine power. God's "mighty hand" achieves what He sets out to do. There is no personality that can withstand His "mighty hand," which is devoted to executing His own will.

The expression "mighty hand" emphasizes what the Lord can do, which is beyond human comprehension. Frequent references are made to the Lord bringing Israel out of Egypt with "a mighty hand" (Ex 32:11; Deut 5:15; 6:21; 7:8,19; 9:26; 26:8). Note also that it was GOD'S own people who were brought out with "a mighty hand" – a covenanted people who were the offspring of Abraham, to whom "the promises were made" (Gal 3:18).

A New Covenant expression that depicts the same truth is this: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph 3:20). In Christ, that power is actually localized in the believer : " according to the power that worketh in us." That is, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, is now devoted to those who are in Him (Eph 1:19-20).

GOTTEN THEE RENOWN

" . . . and hast gotten Thee renown, as at this day . . ." Other versions read, "made Yourself a name, as it is this day," NKJV "made for Yourself a name that endures to this day," NIV and "the renown you won then endures to this day." NJB

While Israel's deliverance from "the iron furnace" (Deut 4:20) brought great benefits to them, it brought even greater glory to God. Even though Israel became well known because of the deliverance, the Lord became known to an even greater degree. Israel's benefit was great, but God's gain was greater.

When the Lord sent Moses to Pharaoh, he told him to demand that Pharaoh let HIS people go (Ex 5:1;7:16; 8:1,20; 9:1,13;10:3). Yet, over and above the deliverance of the people was the exposure to the true God that would result from that glorious event. The Lord told Pharaoh this was the case. “And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth ” (Ex 9:16).

Daniel now makes his appeal upon the basis of the greatness of God’s name. He has a mind for the glory of God, and desires for His great name to again be proclaimed and vindicated. There can be no doubt about the effectiveness of this approach to the Living God. It is one that is driven by faith and perception.

WE HAVE SINNED AND DONE WICKEDLY

“ . . . we have sinned, we have done wickedly.” Once again, the aged prophet acknowledges that no justification for mercy can be found in the people. They have conducted themselves sinfully and wickedly, with no regard for the name of the Lord.

Thus Daniel begins his plea by a strong appeal to the exaltation of the name of the Lord. God will have to act in accord with His own nature, and in the interest of His own glory. He will have to show mercy upon the people in spite of their deplorable conduct, and not because they have done any good.

THE DOOR OF HOPE

Daniel has entered into the door of hope – one which God Himself has opened. Hosea, who lived over one hundred years before Daniel, spoke of a door of hope being opened in the very valley where wrath had been experienced. There was a valley named “the valley of Achor.” It was a place associated with Divine judgment, being where covetous Achan and his family were stoned to death, and burned, together with all of their possessions. After the stoning had taken place, the people “raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor, unto this day” (Josh 7:26).

Hosea spoke of a time when hope would again rise in the valley of chastening. “And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt” (Hosea 2:15). That hope would not rise because of any goodness on the part of Israel, but because of the character of God Himself.

By displaying that character in showing mercy upon wayward Israel, the Lord would gain for Himself an even greater name. Because of that, throughout all history, wherever sinners are driven to despair, the door of hope will be opened to all who look toward the Lord, confess their sins, and seek His mercy. Those who have been chastened severely can come to the Lord again!

It is surely true, “But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (Psa 130:4). O that power would be given to us to proclaim this!

ACCORDING TO THY RIGHTEOUSNESS

“ 16 O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.”

Daniel continues to produce his cause, and bring forth his strong arguments. Remember, all of this has been prompted by two things. First, his knowledge of God, and second, his understanding of the Scriptures, which have indicated the Babylonian captivity was about to conclude.

Daniel does not assume that the end of the captivity automatically meant a return of blessing and prominence. Indeed, both Scriptural and worldly history confirm that did not take place. Faith trusts, but it does not assume things not revealed. The prophet’s knowledge of the nature of God, and the greatness of Israel’s sin compel him to pray in this manner. He will make his appeal upon the basis of God’s righteousness, not the sorrow and oppression of the Israelites. In so doing, he is reflecting the general perception of acceptable prayer that is reflected throughout Scripture. Such prayer is always God-centered.

ACCORDING TO ALL THY RIGHTEOUSNESS

“O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness . . .” Other versions read, “in accordance with all Thy righteous acts,” NASB “in keeping with all Your righteous acts,” NIV “in view of all Your righteous acts,” NRSV and “because of Your righteousness.” BBE

Daniel has just confessed that God was “righteous” in pouring forth evil upon the Israelites for their disobedience, rebellion, and refusal to hear His prophets. However, this beloved man knows well that God’s righteous works are not limited to judgments against sinners. God is also righteous when He shows mercy. He has revealed Himself to be “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.”

It is true that He will also “by no means clearing the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation” (Ex 34:6-7). Daniel knows all too well that his people have tasted of that aspect of the Divine nature. He will now make his appeal to the former and foremost Divine quality that God Himself has accentuated.

There is no doubt that Daniel recalls the Lord's word to Moses, “I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” (Ex 33:19).

The “goodness” of God is an aspect of His righteousness. This quality, which we so sorely need, is displayed when God wants to be gracious to someone, and desires to show them mercy. Having an understanding of God, Daniel will now appeal to God to want to be gracious, and to show mercy, to the offspring of Abraham, to whom the promises were given.

An Application

Faith makes strong appeals to the will of the Lord – not only His revealed will, but to His revealed propensity to bless. Thus a certain leper said to Jesus, “Lord, if Thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” (Matt 8:2). The Lord replied, “I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed” (Matt 8:3).

There were also two blind men who sensed the Savior's inclination to show mercy. Therefore they cried out, “Thou Son of David, have mercy upon us.” Their request was honored (Matt 9:27-29).

And who can forget the cry of the publican: “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Jesus said “he went down to his house justified” (Lk 18:13-14). In fact, the New Covenant, fully ratified by the blood of Jesus, contains this promise, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8:12). What a marvelous pillar upon which to build the covenant.

Believers are urged to seek God's mercy and grace – and to do so boldly, or confidently. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). If circumstances or personal achievement have been less than is desired or required, recovery will be realized in the fervent seeking for mercy and grace – just as exhibited in Daniel, the “greatly beloved.”

I BESEECH THEE

“ . . . I beseech Thee . . . ” The word “beseech” emphasizes entreaty – a strong appeal, or prayer, to the Lord. Other versions read “I pray,” NKJV and “Lord, please.” NLT The word is not even translated in the other versions (NASB, NIV, RSV, BBE, ESV, and NJB).

Daniel is not ashamed, but is rather bold, to urge the Lord to show mercy upon His people. He is going to plead with the Lord as Moses did on the summit of Sinai.

THE TURNING OF ANGER AND FURY

“ . . . let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away . . . ”

Here is a most powerful appeal! There are those who feel the anger and fury of God cannot be turned toward those whom He has blessed. But what will such sophists do with this prayer, for God had blessed Israel, making them a nation, delivering them from Egypt, and giving them the promised land.

Daniel pleads, as I have said, in the same manner as Moses, who said, “ Turn from thy fierce wrath , and repent of this evil against thy people . . . And the LORD repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people” (Ex 32:14). He no doubt also knew of the time of Joshua, when the Lord “turned the fierceness of His anger” away from the people (Josh 7:26). Ezra also knew of this approach to God and therefore counseled the people to put away their strange wives “until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us ” (Ezra 10:14). David also appealed to this Divine tendency: “But He, being full of compassion , forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath” (Psa 78:38).

Daniel’s acquaintance with Scripture, and his familiarity with God Himself, moved him to pray in such a manner. Words cannot fully convey the power of such an approach to God.

An Application

I feel compelled to draw attention to the some of the penalties for a fundamental ignorance of the Word of the Lord. When men are unacquainted with what is “contained in Scripture” (1 Pet 2:6), it directly impacts upon how they pray. Such people cannot properly assess the conditions in which they find themselves, nor can they make petitions for what is actually needed. I do not doubt that much of the deficiency within the professed church is directly traceable to this situation. There are precious few Daniels in this day who can approach the throne of all grace with a proper frame of mind. Prayer, particularly public prayer, tends to be too self centered, with too few appeals for grace and mercy.

THE CITY AND THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

“ . . . from thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain . . . ” Other versions read, “from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain,” NASB and “from Jerusalem. Your city, Your holy hill.” NIV

Here again, Daniel rises to spiritual heights. First he approaches to obtain grace, appealing to the Lord's nature to grant mercy. Now, however, he does not plead for the people, but for the city of Jerusalem – the place where God had placed His name (1 Kgs 11:36). As a whole, the people have not occupied the city for seventy years. It has remained under the dominion of the heathen, with no Jewish king. Also, the situation was the same as it was during the days of king Asa: “Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law” (2 Chron 15:3).

How can such a condition be rectified? Daniel cannot plead upon the basis of the people's longing for the blessing of the Lord, for no such longing has been evidenced. As a people, they had not even sought the Lord, as Daniel has already confessed. But the prophet does not conclude the situation is hopeless because of the miserable deficiency of the people. Thus he makes a higher and more effective appeal. He has already reminded the Lord that He is a covenant keeping God (v 4), that He has been righteous in punishing them (v 7,14), that “mercies and forgivenesses” belong to Him (v 9), and that He delivered the people from Egypt (v 15). Now he adds another consideration in his powerful intercession. It is the city of God!

God's City

Daniel does not refer to Jerusalem as their capital or chief city, but God's city – His “holy mountain.” It belonged to Him because He had chosen to put His name there – that is, to associate Himself with that city. It was for the sake of this city that God had not pulled the kingdom away from Solomon. As it is written, “Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen” (1 Kgs 11:13). Now Daniel appeals to God upon the basis of this city.

God's Holy Mountain

The Psalmist associated Jerusalem with “the holy mountains” (Psa 87:1-2), saying it was “beautiful for situation” (Psa 48:2). In Joel God also referred to Jerusalem as “Zion, My holy mountain” (Joel 3:17). In one of his prophecies, Zechariah also spoke in this manner. “Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain” (Zech 8:3). Other references to God's “holy mountain” include the following: Isa 11:9; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11,25; 66:20; Ezek 20:40; Joel 2:1; Obadiah 1:16; Zeph 3:11.

The Temple in Jerusalem was actually built upon a mountain. We are told that Solomon built the temple on Mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared to David. Some have conjectured that it was also the place where Abraham was commanded to offer Isaac. “Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite” 2 Chron 3:1). That is what made Jerusalem the “holy mountain” – the presence of the Temple in which God further revealed Himself.

God had placed His name upon Jerusalem, and filled the Temple with His glory (1 Kgs 8:11).

Now Daniel makes these epochs key points in his prayer. He reasons with God upon the basis of what He Himself has done.

Once again, I want emphasize the impact of the knowledge of Scripture and personal familiarity with God upon acceptable prayer. It should be exceedingly apparent from this text that Daniel's prayer was shaped by the hammer of the Word and the chisel of knowing Him. These indispensable factors moved him to frame his prayer with faith and hope, and couch it in acceptable words. There is power in his prayer because of the truth expressed in it by faith.

WHEN PEOPLE BECOME A REPROACH

“ . . . because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.”

The man of God can go no further until he again acknowledges the condition and unworthiness of the people in an iniquity that had been willingly among them for some time – “our sins,” and “the iniquities of our fathers.” As a result, the place and the people who had been chosen to bring glory to God had become “a reproach to all that were about” them. When people saw the holy city, they did not think of a mighty God. When they saw the chastened and defeated people of Judah, they did not think about a people with a great and mighty God. Both Jerusalem and the people had become occasions for reproach. How this must have saddened the sensitive heart of Daniel!

AN APPLICATION

The similarities between Jerusalem and the people, and the church of the Western world are staggering. The city God set on a hill has become a reproach, and the people who wear His name have become an occasion for shame. Somebody needs to confess it, and seek mercy from the Lord. The degeneration has gone too far! The scattering of the people is too extensive. The powerlessness of the professed church is too evident. O, for men who can discern the times, and stand in the gap for the people, powerfully pleading with the Lord! How sorely they are needed!

HEAR OUR PRAYER!

“ 17 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.”

Daniel knows the situation can only change by means of a Divine initiative. The people will not be able to work their way back into the favor of God. They have been too weakened by their sin to recover themselves. They will need the favor of God – the kind disposition and outpouring of a gracious

God. Therefore, Daniel pleads with the Lord, beseeching or entreating Him to look favorably upon both Jerusalem and the people. He knows the people are powerless without Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is pointless without the people. If the city is not blessed, the people will not be able to benefit by a return to it. If the people are not blessed, there will be no reason to return to the Jerusalem.

HEAR THE PRAYER!

“Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications . . . ”

The man of God does not take answered prayer for granted. It is true, “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry” (Psa 34:15). However, Daniel does not assume an answer to his prayer. He rather pleads that God will hear his prayer and supplications.

The surface thinker might imagine this to be an evidence of unbelief. Instead, it is the proof of faith. He is producing his cause to the Lord, and part of the presentation is a strong appeal to the Lord to hear his prayer intently and with a mind to answer it. Daniel longs for his prayer and supplications to be honored in heaven.

Five times David, a man after God’s own heart, cried out, “hear my prayer!” (Psa 4:1; 39:12; 54:2; 84:8; 102:1; 143:1). In praying for Jerusalem and the scattered people, Nehemiah also prayed, “hear the prayer of Thy servant” (Neh 1:6). Elijah also cried out on Mount Carmel, “O Lord, hear me!” (1 Kgs 18:37).

Solomon’s Prayer

In Solomon’s dedicatory prayer, he called upon the Lord to hear the prayers of His people when they went out to battle, and to maintain their cause: “If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause ” (1 Kgs 8:44-45). He also prayed concerning the time the people sinned and were consequently carried away captives into the land of the enemy. “If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, 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 Kgs 8:46-49).

Now Daniel is living in a foreign land, into which the people had been carried because they had sinned. He is doing exactly what Solomon said, in precisely the manner he described. Yet, the prophet does not take for granted that God will hear his prayer. He pleads with God to hear him. He knows his prayer has been evoked by a humble and trusting heart, and motivated by an understanding of the Word of God. He realizes God has promised to hear such prayers. Still, he beseeches the Lord as David did, "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer" (Psa 4:1). Why is it necessary for him to speak in such a manner?

Sin Creates A Gap

There is a reason for this kind of fervency. Simply put, it is because sin creates a vast gulf between God and man. The more sin dominates, the larger the gap. Sin desensitizes the heart of man, and repels the heart of God. The heavens tend to become like brass when a covenanted people indulge in sin. The approach to God is still open to contrite hearts under such conditions, but it remains narrow, indeed. It is not possible to have a keen awareness of the dominance of sin, and yet casually approach the Lord. The condition requires the merging of faith and fervency, else the vast chasm cannot be traversed.

When sin has been dominant, men must approach the Lord in all humility. Although faith is able to overcome all fear and doubt, the keen awareness of God's hatred of sin moves the godly to pray in such a manner. Not enough is being said about this in our day.

CAUSE THY FACE TO SHINE

" . . . and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake." Other versions read, "and for Thy sake, O Lord, let Thy face shine on Thy desolate sanctuary," NASB "For your sake, O Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary." NIV

Mark it well, for nearly seventy years, the Lord's anger had been abiding upon Judah and Jerusalem. The city and Temple associated with His great name had been made desolate because of that anger. The heart of the people must have often breathed the words of the psalmist, "Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah" (Psa 77:7-9).

The spirit of the eighty-ninth Psalm had been realized by the entire nation. "But Thou hast cast off and abhorred, Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. Thou hast made void the covenant of Thy servant: Thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. Thou hast broken down all his hedges; Thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbors. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle. Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground" (Psa 89:38-44). Such a condition

would have utterly devastated the ordinary man – but Daniel is no ordinary man ! He knows how to approach the Lord in such times.

Cause Thy Face to Shine

This is the language of favor and blessing. It is the opposite of God setting His face “against” someone (Lev 26:7; Jer 44:11). When God causes His face to shine upon something or someone, He looks with pity, and mercy, with the intention to bless and benefit. Thus the Aaronic blessing included these marvelous words, “The LORD make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num 6:25-26).

Opposite of Hiding His Face

This is the opposite of God hiding His face, which is His reaction to deliberate and continued sin. As it is written , “ I will hide My face from them . . . I will surely hide My face in that day for all the evils which they have wrought . . . He will even hide His face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings” (Deut 31:17,18; Micah 3:4). From this point of view, causing His face to shine is the same as no longer hiding His face (Psa 27:9; 69:17; 102:2; 143:17).

His Presence Becomes Conspicuous

Wherever God causes His face to shine, His presence and favor become conspicuous, thereby inducing hope and enabling recovery.

David’s Prayers

David prayed for this blessing: “ Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant: save me for Thy mercies' sake” (Psa 31:16). He taught the people to use such words in their songs: “To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm or Song. God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; Selah” (Psa 67:1). This Divine posture was also associated with turning the people back to God: “Turn us again, O God, and cause Thy face to shine ; and we shall be saved” (Psa 80:3,7,19). It is the means whereby understanding is imparted to the sons of men: “ Make Thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes” (Psa 119:135).

In this expression grace, mercy, and blessing are prominent. It is more than forgiveness – it is restoration to Divine favor. The spirit of the experience is found in David’s penitential prayer: “ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me , and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness ; that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sins , and blot out all mine iniquities . Create in me a clean heart , O God; and renew a right spirit within me . Cast me not away from Thy presence ; and take not Thy holy spirit from me . Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with Thy free spirit ” (Psa 51:7-12). That is the experience of God’s face shining upon someone. That Divine posture – the shining of His face upon a person – enables recovery from both sin

and the chastening incurred by it.

The Ultimate Experience

The ultimate fulfillment of this experience takes place in the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. As it is written, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts , to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6).

By causing His face to shine, the Lord breaks through the barrier created by sin. All obstacles are overcome, and the penetrating favor of the God of heaven comes to rest upon the object of His attention. Malachi described it in these words: “But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings ; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall” (Mal 4:2).

Upon Thy Sanctuary

Notice how carefully Daniel frames his prayer. He has already mentioned the total unworthiness of the people. He knows their conduct has provoked the Lord of glory. Therefore, he centers upon God’s “sanctuary.”

The Temple. The “sanctuary” is the Temple in particular, which is often so identified (1 Chron 22:19; Psa 74:7; Isa 63:18; Lam 2:17; Dan 8:11).

The Holy of Holies. The holy of holies, the heart of the Temple, was also referred to as “the Sanctuary” (Ex 15:17; Lev 4:6).

Judah. Judah, within which the Temple was situated, is also called “His sanctuary” (Psa 114:2).

What Made It the Sanctuary?

The word “sanctuary” means something that is sacred, consecrated or hallowed – a holy place. It was the presence of the Lord that made the sanctuary a “sanctuary.” When the tabernacle was built, the glory of the Lord “filled the tabernacle,” and no man was able to enter into it (Ex 40:34-35). When the Temple was completed, “the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord,” so that even the priests could not stand to minister in it (1 Kgs 8:11).

The dominating glory that dedicated the Temple is what caused it to be called “the sanctuary.” It is also what caused Jerusalem to have God’s name placed in it, and Judah to be a place and people

associated with God. Men cannot make anything a “sanctuary.” Only the Presence of the Lord can accomplish that.

“That Is Desolate”

The desolation of the Temple involved more than Nebuchadnezzar removing its sacred vessels (2 Chron 36:7), and the burning down of the Temple itself (2 Kgs 25:9). The “desolation” was caused more by the withdrawal of God than the devastation of the enemies.

Actually, the “desolation” began after the death of Solomon, who built the Temple. Ten of the twelve tribes forsook the Temple, or sanctuary, altogether. Jeroboam moved the centers of worship for the ten tribes from Jerusalem to Bethel and Dan. Of this move it is written, “the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem : behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan . And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan . And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi ” (1 Kgs 12:28-31).

Even the tribe of Judah desecrated the Temple by putting idols in and around it (2 Kgs 21:5; 23:12). Thus, the sacking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, and the consequent Babylonian captivity, were the confirmation that God’s glory had departed from the sanctuary. The same thing had happened as took place when the Philistines took the ark of the covenant and placed it in Ashdod. At that time, the daughter-in-law of Eli gave birth to a son. The scriptures say of the naming of that child, “And she named the child Ichabod , saying, The glory is departed from Israel: because the ark of God was taken , and because of her father in law and her husband. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken” (1 Sam 4:21-22).

The departure of the Divine glory from the sanctuary was the particular “desolation” of which Daniel spoke. Its outward destruction was subordinate desolation, brought on by the primary one. Now Daniel asks God to again shine upon His sanctuary, filling it with His glory. He is praying for the presence and blessing of the Lord to again be restored.

For the Lord’s Sake

Daniel does not ask for Divine favor for his own sake, or the sake of Judah. He pleads with the Lord to shine with favor upon them “for the Lord’s sake.” By this, Daniel pleads for the Lord to consider His own reputation and glory. He thus moves the attention from the devastated people and sanctuary to the reproach brought upon the name of the Lord Himself. He knew God was motivated by a concern for His own glory. Through Isaiah the Lord had spoken in this way: “For Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? and I will not give My glory unto another” (Isa 48:11).

Israel had been duly punished for their sin by the fulfilling of the seventy years prophesied by Jeremiah. Daniel considers that the prolonged desecration of the Temple would dishonor the Lord, and give too much credit to the enemies of the covenanted people.

This is the same reasoning employed by Moses when he asked the Lord not to destroy the people he was leading. He did not want the Lord to have a bad name.

Moses' Prayer

“And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people , which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did He bring them out , to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath , and repent of this evil against Thy people . Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants , to whom Thou swarest by Thine own Self , and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever” (Ex 32:11-13).

Powerful Reasoning

This is powerful reasoning, having the honor and glory of God in mind. In the New Covenant, believers are admonished to keep the Lord in mind in even mundane responsibilities. “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme” (1 Pet 2:13). Just as surely as God regarded the prayers of Moses and Daniel, such consideration will not be overlooked.

Prayers that earnestly seek the honor of the Lord, and the promotion of His glory, are powerful ones. The public display of a gracious God is of infinitely greater worth than our personal welfare. Of course, it is to be understood that such a display will bring great advantages to those who seek such glory and honor for the Lord. They will be caught in the flood-tide of Divine glory, and made the better for it.

FOR THY GREAT MERCIES

“ 18 O my God, incline Thine ear, and hear; open Thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name: for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies.”

Daniel continues to pray with great fervency. He has already besought the Lord to “hear” (v 17) – now he does it again. He has asked the Lord to turn away his anger and fury from Jerusalem (v 16) and cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary (v 17) – now he pleads for the Lord to look upon their desolations, and upon His own city. He has also asked the Lord to do this for His own sake (v 17) – now he pleads for this to be done for His great mercies’ sake.

There is some redundancy in this prayer, but it is far from being “vain repetition,” against which Jesus warned (Matt 6:7). There are some who affirm that repeating something in prayer is a sign of unbelief. Here it is evidence of faith – great faith. Jesus repeated one of His prayers three times (Matt 26:44). Paul made the same request three times (2 Cor 12:8). Elijah prayed the same prayer seven times (1 Kgs 18:42-44). Jesus spoke of effective prayer as making the same petition repeatedly – importunity (Luke 11:5-8; 18:3-7). It is uncomely for the people of God to entertain foolish and juvenile views of Scripture. Men “should always pray and not give up” (Lk 18:1). NIV This is precisely what Daniel is doing.

INCLINE THINE EAR

“O my God, incline Thine ear, and hear . . .” Other versions read, “Give ear, O God, and hear,” NIV “let your ear be turned and give hearing,” BBE and “Listen, my God, listen to us.” NJB

There is a sense in which all words are heard by the Lord, even if they are idle. When the Israelites complained, “the Lord heard it” (Num 11:1). When Aaron and Miriam spoke against Moses, “the Lord heard it” (Num 12:2). When the unbelieving spies discouraged the people by saying they were incapable of taking the promised land, Moses told them “the Lord heard the voice of your words” (Deut 1:34).

Daniel is not praying with academic words. He knew he could say nothing that the Lord would not hear. But he is not praying that the sound of his words would be heard in heaven. Rather, He is asking the Lord to listen intently to what he is saying, and be inclined to answer his request. Five times David also prayed, “incline Thine ear” (Psa 17:6; 45:10; 71:2; 88:2; 102:2). When confronted with the threat of Sennacherib, Hezekiah prayed, “Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and hear” (Isa 37:17).

An Application

This raises prayer beyond mere obligation or routine. Such prayers cannot be offered perfunctorily. In my opinion, lifeless religion, or a form of godliness that denies the power thereof (2 Tim 3:5), has robbed the people of this perspective of prayer. Even though there is a serious deficiency in the American church, yet it is not noted for frequent and fervent prayer. Until such prayer surfaces among those with tender hearts, there is no hope of the situation changing.

OPEN THINE EYES

“ . . . open Thine eyes . . . ” Daniel besought the Lord to open His eyes and behold their desolations. Hezekiah asked Him to open His eyes and see the letter Sennacherib had boastfully written (Isa 37:17).

Again, there is a sense in which the Lord sees everything, for “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb 4:13). Daniel desires the Lord to concentrate on their dilemma – to look upon it with pity and mercy, and with a regard for His own name and glory.

BEHOLD OUR DESOLATIONS

“ . . . and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name . . . ” The NIV reads, “see the desolation of the city that bears Your name.” The phrase “our desolations” may have a general reference to the people, but the particular point of Daniel’s emphasis is the city of Jerusalem itself. That is where God had placed His name. That is, He had, in a special way, associated Himself with that city. Thus it is called “Jerusalem the holy city” (Neh 11:1; Isa 52:1).

Daniel’s Reckoning

Daniel knows that God will have regard for His city if He looks upon it. It will awaken His pity and mercy, for it was a place precious to Him. That is precisely why Jeremiah said to those who would survive Nebuchadnezzar’s onslaught, “Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind ” (Jer 51:50). Daniel is allowing Jerusalem to come into his mind, and he knows God is also inclined to think of it.

Those who can, through prayer, move the Lord to look upon them, will receive mercy from Him. That is why David prayed, “Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death” (Psa 9:13). Again he prayed, “ Look upon mine affliction and my pain ; and forgive all my sins” (Psa 25:18). And again, “Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of Thine anointed ” (Psa 84:9).

This is something you do not want to miss. Those who earnestly plead for the Lord to look upon or consider them, will not fail to be mercifully considered by Him. This is because “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psa 51:17). Of those who see their plight with spiritual clarity, and call upon the name of the Lord, this is written: “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer” (Psa 102:17).

Those who live by faith will never arrive at a point where this is not a most precious consideration. The people of God must be encouraged to seek the Lord in this manner.

NOT FOR OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

“ . . . for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies.”

Now, Daniel is praying in the behalf of the people: “we . . . our.” As a true intercessor he identifies with those for whom he prays. If it is said of God Himself, “In all their affliction he was afflicted” (Isa 63:9), will not those who fellowship with Him participate in such feelings?

Here is a prayer that is not based upon the merit of the people. In one of David’s deliverances he prayed, “The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness : according to the cleanness of my hands hath He recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD , and have not wickedly departed from my God . For all His judgments were before me: and as for His statutes, I did not depart from them . I was also upright before Him , and have kept myself from mine iniquity ” (2 Sam 22:21-24). He also spoke of his integrity as a reason for God’s consideration of him (Psa 26:1,11; 41:12). Job also cried out, “Let me be weighed in an even balance that God may know mine integrity ” (Job 31:6).

However, Daniel knows that the children of Judah can make no such claim. If they receive consideration from God, it cannot be upon the basis of their diligence, faithfulness, or integrity.

This does not mean, however, that no mercy can be received. Therefore, instead of appealing to their righteousness, the man of God appeals to God’s righteousness – for He IS righteous in granting mercy . As I have already dealt with this aspect of the Divine nature, here it will suffice to say only a few words on the subject. God is gracious to those toward whom to whom He wants to be gracious. He is also shows mercy toward all to whom He wants to show mercy (Ex 33:19; Rom 9:15,18).

However, showing grace and mercy are not the result of heartless and arbitrary choice. His preference, love, and inclination enters into it. God is “righteous” in such bestowals, as the day of judgment will confirm.

FORGIVE, HEARKEN, AND DEFER NOT

“ 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name.”

Now Daniel comes to the matter of forgiveness. The sin of the people has been great, and therefore the forgiveness must also be great. There is such a thing as “much” being forgiven. As the Lord Jesus Himself said, “Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Lk 7:47). Of course, no person of understanding has ever considered the Lord’s forgiveness of them to have been “little.” Paul, whose external moral infractions of the Law were far less than than the sinful woman from the city. Yet, when he assessed his own condition prior to Christ, he said he was “chief,” or “worst,” among “sinners” (1 Tim 1:15).

In the case of Judah, their sin was large because much had been given to them – for sin is considered in direct proportion to the light and Divine consideration that has been given. That is why sin in the church is infinitely worse than when it is found among the heathen.

FORGIVE

“O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do . . .” Other versions read, “O Lord hear! O Lord forgive!” NASB “O Lord listen! O Lord forgive!” NIV “O Lord, give ear; O Lord, have forgiveness.” BBE

Here is a plea of unusual strength. The awareness of the holiness of God and the heinousness of sin moves Daniel to pray in this manner. For him, sin was a most serious thing, for the closer to, or more conscious of, the Lord the individual is, the greater sin appears. Those who are casual, or even indifferent, about sin, by that every attitude, acknowledge they are aloof from the Lord. Such people are more interested in their own will, than in obtaining the forgiveness of the Lord.

Holy men have always pled for forgiveness. Hear Moses as he beseeches the Lord. “ Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy , and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now” (Num 14:19). When the Lord showed Amos a vision of grasshoppers devouring the land, the prophet prayed, “And it came to pass, that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech Thee : by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small” (Amos 7:2).

In the cases of both Moses and Amos, the Lord responded favorably. To Moses He said, “I have pardoned according to thy word ” (Num 14:20). To Amos He said, “The LORD repented for this: It shall not be , saith the LORD” (Amos 7:3).

Now Daniel stands for the people, seeking forgiveness for them, even though they are

undeserving of such mercy. He does not ask casually, or in a superficial manner. His heart is in his prayer, and his prayer is in his heart. What is even more, He is appealing to God's nature, for He is "good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon" Him (Psa 86:5). He revealed Himself to Moses as One who is "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin" (Ex 34:7). Through Joel He revealed "He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. Who knoweth if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him . . ." (Joel 2:13-14). Through Micah He declared, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18). Isaiah said the Lord would "abundantly pardon" (Isa 55:7).

Daniel knew these things, believing them with his heart. That is why he prayed in this manner. Like Moses, he was familiar with the "ways" of the Lord.

DEFER NOT

". . . defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God . . ." Other versions read, "Do not delay for Your own sake," NKJV "For Thine own sake, O my God, do not delay," NASB and "let there be no more waiting; for the honor of Your name." BBE

Those who seek forgiveness do not want delay. The conviction of sin moves the individual to plead for immediate forgiveness, whether it be for a man or for a nation. A haphazard approach to receiving forgiveness from God is sure evidence of unbelief and hardness of heart.

The Psalmist prayed similarly for the people. "Wilt Thou be angry with us for ever? wilt Thou draw out thine anger to all generations? Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? Show us Thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us Thy salvation" (Psa 85:5-7).

Sin is of such a nature that forgiveness must not be delayed. Until iniquity is forgiven, it continues to harden the heart, sear the conscience, and blind the mind. This is not a common perception. That is why there has been a sudden rise in counseling, the propagation of perfunctory routines, and other various patterns of thought that are classified as "the rudiments of the world" (Col 2:8). All such things allow for a delay in forgiveness and the purging of the conscience. However, the conviction of the Spirit makes no such allowance. When people can wait to be forgiven, it is only because they are not stricken with the magnitude of their sin.

CALLED BY THY NAME

". . . for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name." Other versions read, "because Your city and Your people bear Your name," NIV "because thy name is invocated upon thy city, and upon thy people," DOUAY "for Your name is attached to Your city and Your people!" TNK

The righteous always take seriously anything or anyone that is associated with the Living God. Whether it is a person, a city, the Law, the tabernacle, or even a day – anything that has God’s name attached to it is to be considered with great sobriety. That is not even to mention His only begotten Son, the New Covenant, and the church He has purchased with His own blood. The name of the Lord is holy, and wherever it is found, the due regard of men is required. For those in Christ, associations with God include, the Word (Word of God, Eph 6:17), the Spirit (Spirit of God, Rom 8:9), the Lord Jesus (Son of God, Rom 1:4), the church (church of God, 1 Tim 3:5), the saints (children of God, 1 John 3:10), the truth (truth of God, Rom 15:8), etc. Daniel prays in view of the associations declared under the First Covenant.

Thy City

Jerusalem is called “the city of God” (Psalm 46:4; 87:3), and “the city of the great King” (Psa 48:2) – the city where God “chose to put” His name (1 Kgs 11:3). God also referred to it as “My city” (Lam 3:51), and “The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth” (Lam 2:15). The Lord said there would be a time when Jerusalem would be called “the throne of the Lord” (Jer 3:17), and “the city of truth” (Zech 8:3).

Such holy associations (all of which were known to Daniel), moved the prophet to ask God to consider the city of Jerusalem. In so doing, He would bring honor and glory to His own name. Daniel considered that the desolation of such a city brought reproach upon the Lord.

Thy People

When the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, Moses told them they would be viewed as the people of God. “And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD ; and they shall be afraid of thee” (Deu 28:10).

When God sent Moses to speak to Pharaoh, He told him to tell Pharaoh, “Let MY people go” (Ex 5:1). Through the Psalmist the Lord said, “Hear, O My people , and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God” (Psa 50:7).

Daniel does not refer to the children of Judah as his own people, but the people of God. He is the One who chose them. As Moses said to the people, “The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers , hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deut 7:8).

And why does Daniel ask the Lord to forgive, and not to defer to do so? It is because the holy city and the Israelites are called by God's name! The name of the Lord has been associated with them, and they with Him. All the more reason for God to look upon them with favor, giving ear to the prayer of a man "greatly loved" in heaven.

The underlying supposition is that a blessed and forgiven people will bring glory to God. A chastened and unforgiven people do not bring honor to Him.

CONCLUSION

Thus, in sixteen verses, Daniel has presented his powerful petition to the Lord. Ponder what he has done in this prayer.

- Acknowledged the Lord is a great and dreadful God (v 4a).
- Confessed the Lord as one who keeps the covenant, and mercy for those who love Him and keep His commandments" (v 4b).
- Acknowledged the covenanted people had sinned, committed iniquity, done wickedly, rebelled, and departed from the Lord's precepts and judgments (v 5).
- Confessed the people had not hearkened to God's servants the Prophets, who spoke in the Lord's name to their kings, princes, fathers, and to all the people of the land (v 6).
- Acknowledged that righteousness belonged to the Lord (7a).
- Acknowledged that confusion of face belonged to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all of Israel who had been scattered (7b).
- Confessed that the people had been scattered because of their trespass against the Lord (v 7c).
- Reaffirmed that confusion of face belonged to their kings, princes, and their fathers because they had sinned against God (v 8).
- Affirmed that mercies and forgivenesses belonged to the Lord, even though the people had rebelled against Him (v 9).

- Confessed they had not obeyed the voice of the Lord to walk in His laws, which He had set before them by the Prophets (v 10).
- Declared that all Israel had transgressed God's Law by departing from Him, that they might not obey His voice (v 11a).
- Concluded that God's curse had been poured out upon them according to the oath God had declared through Moses (v 11b).
- Acknowledged God had confirmed His word which had been spoken against them and their judges, by bringing great evil upon them (v 12).
- Confessed that in spite of the judgment leveled against them, they had not sought the Lord in prayer in order that they might turn from their iniquities (v 13).
- Declared that the Lord had sought the right time to administer chastening and judgment to them (v 14a).
- Confessed that the Lord was righteous in all that He did to them, for they had sinned (v 14b).
- Recalled how the Lord had brought the people out of Egypt with a mighty hand (v 15 a).
- Affirmed that God had gotten renown for Himself (v 15b).
- Again confessed the people had sinned and done wickedly (v 15c).
- Pled with the Lord to turn His anger away from His city Jerusalem, and His holy mountain (v 16a).
- Confessed that because of their sins and the iniquities of their fathers, Jerusalem and the people had become a reproach to all about them (v 16b).
- Asked the Lord to hear his prayer and supplications (v 17a).
- Besought the Lord to cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary that was desolate, and to do so for His own name's sake (v 17b).
- Asked the Lord to listen to what he was praying, and look upon their desolations, and the city which was called by His name (v 18a).
- Confessed their supplications were not offered because of their righteousness, but because of God's mercies (v 18b).

- Asked the Lord to forgive the people, and not defer to do so (v 19a).
- Besought the Lord forgive them because His city and His people were called by His name (v 19b).

There is a noble example of presenting an ordered cause to the Lord, and filling ones mouth with arguments (Job 23:4). It is a view of what is involved in reasoning with the Lord (Isa 1:18). This is what is involved in putting the Lord “in remembrance,” pleading “together” with Him, and declaring in order that justification might be realized (Isa 43:26). It is something “kings and priests” should pursue.

The Prophecy of Daniel

DANIEL RECEIVES INSIGHT CONCERNING THE MESSIAH

Lesson # 29

INTRODUCTION

As a man “greatly beloved” by God, truth will be vouchsafed to Daniel that is most extraordinary. Things are revealed to him that would occur well after his own time – things pertaining to the coming Savior of the world – the Messiah. Such exposures to the truth of God unveil the folly of approaching truth only from a here-and-now point of view; that is, seeking to confine the relevancy of truth to the present generation. This approach to Scripture has become altogether too popular in our time. Those who would have us believe that the contemporary application of Scripture is more important than the Scriptures themselves have greatly erred. Such an approach would make the Divine explanation before us wholly irrelevant to Daniel. He is going to be told things that will take place nearly half of a millennium after he will die. That would like speaking to people today (2003) of events

that will take place some time after 2500. The sophist would conclude that such a message is irrelevant, having nothing to do with “us.” However, that is not a proper assessment of the case.

THE POWER OF TRUTH

The power and relevancy of truth are owing to its origin and purpose, not its perceived applicability to a given generation or circumstance. Truth originates with God Almighty, who is not even capable of saying or doing something that is irrelevant – in or to any age. All irrelevance pertains to the works and works of man, and none of it pertains to God or what He has said.

Truth is always couched within the context of the purpose of God, which is really the ONLY truly relevant matter.

The fact that God has said something **MAKES** it relevant. As it is written, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17). Any word that is inspired, is profitable for teaching, reproving, correcting, and instructing in righteousness, cannot be irrelevant – whether it is found in Genesis, Daniel, or Revelation.

The fact that God has purposed something **MAKES** it relevant. The purpose of God – particularly His “eternal purpose” (Eph3:11) – is the driving force behind all that has happened, is happening, and will happen in this world. We are “saved” and “called” according to that purpose (Rom 8:28; 2 Tim 1:9). Further, everything that God does is in strict accord that His purpose (Eph 1:10-11).

The prophet Daniel was “greatly beloved” of the Lord, yet the working of the Lord did not revolve around him. The nation of Israel was chosen by God, and He dealt exclusively with them prior to Jesus Christ (Rom 9:4-5). Yet, the working of the Lord did not revolve around them. Even in our day, the church has been purchased by Christ’s blood, and is the solitary custodian of the truth of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:15). Yet Divine activities do not revolve around, or center in, the church. God works in strict accord with His own immutable purpose. So far as a person is concerned, His works all center in His “only begotten Son,” the Lord Jesus Christ.

STATED ANOTHER WAY

This point is of such importance that I am compelled to elaborate still more upon it. Nothing is really relevant, crucial, or of critical importance, that is not related to the purpose of God, which is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Necessary To Say These Things

The necessity of making this observation is found in many of the approaches that are taken to the book of Daniel. For some, Daniel's primary message is of a coming Antichrist – and such an one is represented as being effective in the world following the removal of the church. All manner of fanciful human interpretations are put forth from this book that have very little, if anything, to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. However, God simply does not have anything to say that is unrelated to Christ. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus (Col 1:19; 2:9), and the entirety of His “eternal purpose” is found in “Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph 3:11).

“All judgment” has been given into the hands of the Lord Jesus (John 5:22), and none has been given to the Antichrist, or any other personality. The world is going to be judged in righteousness by Christ (Acts 17:31), not by the Antichrist. The preeminence has been given to Jesus (Col 1:18), not to the Antichrist. The “testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”(Rev 19:10), not a word about the Antichrist.

This does not suggest there is no such personality as “the Antichrist,” for the Word of God affirms the existence of such a personality (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). However, although there is only one Christ, there are “many antichrists” (1 John 2:18). Therefore, neither “the Antichrist” or the “many antichrists” are ever the emphasis of Scripture.

If I read the passage of Scripture before us, and come away thinking about “the Antichrist,” I have not profited from it. At some point, my thoughts must become absorbed with the Person, accomplishments, and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

PROPHECY

In these days, there has been a remarkable resurgence of emphasis on prophecy. It is not unusual to hear of those who are experts in prophecy, and their books are quite prominent in religious book stores. It is interesting to note, however, that few of them focus on the Lord Jesus – upon whom God, the holy angels, and the Scriptures are focused. The word of the angel is worthy of constant affirmation: “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10).

Jesus is to prophecy, what the spirit is to the body. Without Him, prophecy has no relevance or value, but is like a body without a spirit. But allow me to be even more precise, as the angel was with John. It is the “TESTIMONY of Jesus” that is he “spirit,” or life, “of prophecy.” This means that ultimately, the word of prophecy itself concerns the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the subject-matter of the prophetic word. The “testimony” is the “witness” of Jesus, not a hidden and subtle reference to Him. Technically, the word “testimony” means concrete and objective information given in proof of something . . . giving a witness . . . declaration . . . presenting evidence. Jesus said it more clearly than any lexical aid. “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Here, the word “testify” is precisely the same one used in Revelation 19:10 (**marturi,an**). The use of the word in John 5:39 is as a verb (– i.e., “are testifying.” In Revelation, it is as a noun – i.e., “ the testimony” (**ai` marturou/sai**). The statement made in Revelation is this: Prophecy is a testimony, or witness, of Jesus. It is like a living witness called to testify in a court. Prophecy, therefore, is a Divinely appointed means of making Christ more clear to our hearts and minds.

All of this will become evident in our text, which will zero in, so to speak, on the Lord Jesus – “Messiah the Prince.” Think of it in this way. Whether we look at Scripture through a telescope or a microscope, Jesus is the substance of it. If we view it as through a telescope, we see a grand overview of Divine words and dealings – and they all center in Jesus. If we get down to the finest details, they concern the Lord Jesus, and find their ultimate meaning and significance in Him.

A BRIEF SUMMATION

God has made known many things to Daniel. He has revealed the rise and fall of Babylon, the Medes and the Persians, Greece, and Rome. Alexander the Great, Antiochus Epiphanes, and a spiritual despot that competes with Jesus have also been revealed. Daniel has been exposed to the desecration of the Temple, the ending of the daily sacrifices, the day of judgment, and the resurrection of the dead. But at the heart of it all is the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything that has been revealed relates to His entrance into the world and the superiority and prominence of His kingdom.

We cannot fail to see this, or afford to be distracted by allowing carnal curiosity to move our attention to lesser things. We will see in the passage before us that when an explanation from heaven is given to Daniel, it centers in the Lord Jesus. Everything else is subordinate to Him and His role in the salvation of God. We must not allow ourselves to entertain a view or Scripture that makes the Lord Jesus a secondary consideration.

WHILE I WAS SPEAKING

“ 9:20 And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God.”

There are certain Kingdom principles, or manners, revealed in this text. In the final days of the Judges, Samuel explained “the manner of the kingdom,” writing it down in a book (1 Sam 10:25). Since the people were shifting to a government by a king, they needed to know that such a kingdom operated on differing principles than those to which they were accustomed during the Judges. Likewise, consciously living under the government of God requires some understanding. Such a life differs significantly from life in this world. A single example will suffice.

Principle

Divine direction and communication take place within the context of Divine fellowship – or through the knowledge of God. This is involved in the “steps of a good man” being “ordered by the Lord” (Psa 37:23). From the New Covenant -perspective it is escaping “the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 2:20), and receiving benefits from Him because we are “walking in the light as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7).

This is something that must be seen. There is a strain of doctrine that represents God has suddenly thrusting Himself upon men in advantageous ways – even when they are not involved with Him. Thus men are taught to expect sudden and profitable illumination and direction from the God of heaven while they walk in practical alienation from Him. Such views are only human imaginations, wholly lacking substance.

It is true that the Lord can force His way into our lives, as He did with Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:3-6). However, that has never been the norm of the Kingdom – and even then, it was more to get Saul’s attention than to bestow a blessing on the persecutor. Jesus sent Saul to someone else to receive the details concerning his call. Those details were sent to him while he was praying (Acts 9:11).

In our text, a message is sent to Daniel while he was “speaking, praying, and confessing” to the Lord. Such activities sharpen the mind, sensitive the heart, and tenderize the human spirit, thereby enabling the individual to profit from Divine communication.

This is how the Lord works. Those who choose to live aloof from the Lord, by that very choice, limit what they will hear from Him. This is particularly accented in Christ Jesus. It is written, “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him” NIV (2 Pet 1:3). That is, in our intimacy, or fellowship, with the Lord Divine supplies are given to us. This is another way of saying that salvation in all of its aspects is “by grace . . . through faith” (Eph 2:8).

SPEAKING, PRAYING, AND CONFESSING

“And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel . . .”

Speaking

“Speaking” is coming before the Lord “with words,” as He commands (Hos 14:2). It is the expression of thought in languages – giving expression to the thoughts and intents of the heart. “Speaking” is the presentation of a cause (Isa 41:21), and the filling of the mouth with arguments (Job 23:4).

Praying

“Praying” is making a supplication, entreating or beseeching the Lord. It is seeking something specific from Him – making a hearty effort to “obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need” (Heb 4:16). “Prayer” is more than simply talking with God, or holding a conversation with the Almighty. There is nothing casual about it. Real prayer is “fervent” as well as “effectual” (James 5:16).

It might sound reasonable to view prayer in such an academic manner. However, an acute awareness of the Person and will of God Himself will soon cause such approaches to wither, and be seen for the folly they really are. Too much theology is developed without a proper understanding or fear of the Lord.

Confessing

“Confessing” is not empty routine. The heart is in confession, which is the acknowledgment of something impressed upon the heart – whether it be of sin, or that Jesus is the Son of God. In this text, Daniel is confessing sin – both his, and that of the people. He is doing so with insight and with fervency.

Confessing My Sin

Daniel is one of the few key people in Scripture against whom no specific sin is recorded. Yet, here he is said to confess his own sin. There is no doubt that his keen sensitivity to the Lord increased his sensitivity toward sin. Sin involves more than an obvious and flagrant transgression of the Law. “The thought of foolishness is sin” as well (Prov 24:6). Asaph knew this well, and recorded his own battle with foolish thinking in the seventy-third Psalm. After being “envious of the foolish,” having witnessed “the prosperity of the wicked,” he went into the “sanctuary of God.” There, he was made to see things with greater clarity. In the greater light of “the sanctuary” he confessed, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before Thee” (Psa 73:1-22). In the presence of God, Asaph became more sensitive about sin.

Another man against whom no specific sin is charged is Job. Yet, during his trial he cried out, “How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin” (Job 13:23). He spoke of “my sin” and “my transgression” (Job 14:16-17). The Lord testified of him, “In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:22). Yet, Job was keenly aware of his personal imperfection – even though the Holy Spirit describes him as “perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1). After being asked two chapters of questions by God Almighty (Job 38-39), and being asked if he was going to “contend with the Almighty” or “instruct Him” (Job 40:1-2), Job answered, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth” (Job 40:4).

This is the kind of thing Daniel is confessing to the Lord. He is not acknowledging he has lived in willing disobedience or rebellion against the Lord, for there is no evidence that such a thing ever took place. He was a man “greatly beloved” of God (Dan 9:23; 10:11,19). One of the reasons for this Divine endearment is no doubt Daniel’s sensitivity to his own frailty and proneness to sin.

The Sin of My People Israel

Like Moses and Samuel, Daniel associates himself with the covenanted people. He does not do so because he has been caught up in their rebellion and iniquity. Rather, he is claiming identity with them as a covenanted people – the children of Abraham, and those with whom God had made a covenant. He confesses their sin as those who have broken that covenant (Jer 31:32; Ezek 26:59).

Daniel is not ashamed to be identified with these people – not because of their sin and waywardness, but because they are of Abraham’s lineage. That lineage is the root of their identity with God, and the foundation upon which Daniel builds his petition. He is praying for a people upon whom God has placed His favor – a people to whom certain Divine commitments have been made.

Something to See

Here was a people chosen by God. He had “set” His love upon them (Deut 7:7). Their history was nothing less than a confirmation of the Lord’s interest in them. No other people on the face of the earth had heard such words as were spoken to them. “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places” (Deu 33:29).

Surface thinkers would conclude such a people did not require repentance, confession, prayer, and supplication. After all, flesh reasons, once God has made a commitment to a people, there is no longer any threat of danger, or need or recovery. No man of God ever thought in such a foolish way! We can learn from Daniel that fervent and effectual prayers for a backslidden people are in order. It is wrong to take for granted that everything will turn out for the good, as though the purpose of God was driven by some form of fate, or impersonal destiny.

The purpose of God are worked out with the involvement of those who know Him. Whether it is Abraham inquiring concerning the fulfillment of God’s promise (Gen 15:3-4), Moses interceding for a wayward people (Ex 32:31-32), Daniel praying for a chastised nation (Dan 9:3-27), or Paul praying for the churches (Eph 1:15-20; 3:15-20) – those who walk with God are brought into intimacy with God and the execution of His “eternal purpose.”

PRESENTING MY SUPPLICATION

“ . . . and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God . . . ” Other versions read, “making my request,” NIV “requesting grace from the Lord my God,” BBE “bringing my pitiful case before the Lord my God,” Septuagint “placing my plea before Yahweh my God,” NJB “pleading with the LORD my God,” NLT and “causing my supplication to fall before Jehovah my God.” YLT

There is much to be seen in this expression. A certain formality is seen in Daniel's prayer. It is not a cold or routine formality, but one resulting from an understanding of both God and the circumstances moving him to pray. The presentation is made with thoughtful and precise words, as well as a fervent spirit and tender heart. Daniel has thought upon the matter, and thus makes NIV his prayer to God, forming it with words and giving it life with a profound concern for the glory of God and the benefit of His people. The man of God does not question the Lord, or make demands of Him, but humbly requests BBE grace from Him. He does not come before the Lord "empty," but brings Septuagint a fashioned prayer with him. With great deliberation he places NJB his prayer before the Lord for His consideration. He is fervent in his supplication, pleading NLT for the people. Even though the devil no doubt attempted to hinder this prayer, yet Daniel caused YLT it to come from his lips.

When a church is uninformed about the Lord, and unconcerned about His people, there is little chance that any effective prayers will come from them. If only men can see it, this provides an extensive explanation for much of the spiritual deterioration that is all about us.

FOR THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

“ . . . for the holy mountain of my God.” Other versions read, “in the behalf of the holy mountain of my God,” NASB “for His holy hill.” NIV

Ten times God refers to “My holy mountain” (Isa 11:9; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20; Joel 2:1; 3:17; Obad1:16; Zeph 3:17). He specifically identifies it as “My holy mountain Jerusalem” (Isa 66:20). Joel declared that God dwelt there (Joel 3:17), indicating that it would be the point from which the earth would filled with “the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:9). Jesus referred to one of Isaiah's prophecies concerning this “holy mountain” when He said, “My house shall be called a house of prayer” (Matt 21:13; Isa 56:7). God had judged Israel for forgetting His “holy mountain” (Isa 65:11), and now Daniel prays in behalf of it.

Daniel is praying concerning Jerusalem. He is letting Jerusalem come into his mind, thus fulfilling the word of the Lord through Jeremiah. “Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind ” (Jer 51:50). He is doing what the Psalmist enjoined. “ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem : they shall prosper that love thee” (Psa 122:6). He is doing what David himself did, praying for the holy city. “Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem” (Psa 51:18). He is experiencing the same attitude as the sweet Psalmist of Israel. “If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy” (Psa 137:6).

There are some who do not feel God can possibly be associated with anything tangible. Daniel did not think in this manner. Associations God had made with Himself have always been held sacred by men and women of God. For Daniel, that included Jerusalem and the Temple. Jesus regarded Jerusalem and he Temple in the same manner. Jerusalem was the only city in all of history over which Jesus wept and lamented (Lk 19:41). The Temple was the building He cleansed, referring to it as His Father's house (John 2:16). There was a specific garden to which Jesus “ofttimes resorted” (John 18:2).

Jerusalem was the only city toward which Paul hastened, striving to be “at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost” (Acts 20:19). This is not to mention our bodies, which are said to be “the members of Christ” (1 Cor 6:15) and “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19). Add to that the people of God themselves, considering that our response to their outward needs bears directly upon our eternal destiny (Matt 25:34-46).

We must take great care not to ignore people or places with which God has associated Himself.

A Principle to be Seen

But there is an even greater principle to be seen in this text that regards prayer. Note that Daniel is not praying for himself, his own welfare, or his prosperity in Babylon. Rather, he is praying for something in which God Himself has revealed an interest.

It is on the part of wisdom to focus our attention on matters in which the Living God has a revealed interest and concern. His agenda will receive His immediate attention, and our involvement will bring a blessing.

THE MAN GABRIEL

“ 21 Yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.”

Here is an example of a prayer being answered before it was completed. It is the sort of thing God promised through the prophet Isaiah, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (Isa 65:24). It is evident from the heavenly response that this prayer touched the heart of God. Daniel’s heart was beating in unison with the heart of God, and thus he received an immediate answer. The things about which the God of heaven was concerned were the same things that were touching the heart of Daniel. It is no wonder he was a man “greatly beloved” (9:23; 10:11,19). The more a person thinks in concert with the Lord, the closer they are to Him, and the more will be revealed to them.

The people of God must wage war on the tendency to get God involved in their own agenda or circumstances. That involvement will happen when we are occupied with things that relate to God’s revealed purpose.

THE SAME GABRIEL

“Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning . . . ”

The angel Gabriel appeared to Zecharias one time (Lk 1:10). He appeared to Mary, the mother of our Lord, one time (Lk 1:26). This is the second time he has appeared to Daniel. This is indicative of the high favor Daniel had obtained in the heavenly realm. It is good to ponder the possibilities of loving and serving God.

Special People

The incident instructs us in the ways of the Lord. It is possible to be especially precious to the Lord. Those who imagine that God regards every person the same are simply wrong.

- Abraham was “THE friend of God” (James 2:23).
- David was a man after God’s “own heart” (1 Sam 13:14).
- The Lord spoke with Moses in a way He did not speak to others – “face to face as a man speaketh with his friend” (Ex 33:11).
- Among The nations of the world, Israel was “precious: in God’s sight, and He gave men for her, and people for her life (Isa 43:4).
- John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:7).
- Mary was “highly favored” (Lk 1:28).

Such people have received special consideration and revelations from the Lord – things that were not made known to others. There is such a thing as special favor from the Lord.

- The made known His acts to Israel, but revealed His “ways” to Moses (Psa 103:7).
- The Lord was especially with Joseph, causing him to become a “prosperous man” in the house of Potiphar, and showing him mercy and giving him “favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison” (Gen 39:2,21).
- Visions and revelations were given to Paul that others did not receive (2 Cor12:1-7).

- There are people who are vouchsafed special insights from the Lord – people with whom He shares His “secret” and shows “His covenant” (Psa 25:14).

Daniel was such a person – “greatly beloved,” and highly favored. Heaven treated him with a special consideration. To be given the privilege of holding a conversation with Gabriel, who stood “in the presence of God” (Lk 1:19) is an honor only three individuals in human history enjoyed – and Daniel was vouchsafed two such appearances.

“The Man Gabriel”

Technically, Gabriel was an angel, and not a man. He is particularly called “the angel Gabriel” (Lk 1:26), and when he spoke, is described as “the angel answering” (Lk 1:19). How is it, then, that he is called “the man Gabriel?”

It is because he appeared in a human form. On one occasion, Mephibosheth said to David, “my lord the king is as an angel of God” (2 Sam 19:27). However, in our text, Gabriel the angel appeared as a man.

There have been other appearance of angels in human form.

- Angels were sent to Abraham to announce the birth of Isaac and the destruction of Sodom. They appeared to Abraham as “three men” (Gen 18:2). These angels spoke for the Lord, and thus their word was described as the Lord speaking with Abraham (Gen 18:33).
- “Two angels” came to Sodom to destroy it. When they went into Lot’s house, the perverts of Sodom thought they were “men.” When the men of Sodom sought to force themselves into Lot’s house, it is said of these two angels, “But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door” (Gen 19:10). Of the incidents of Abraham and Lot it is written, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares” (Heb 13:2).
- A heavenly messenger wrestled with Jacob all night, causing his thought to be out of joint when touching him (Gen 32:24-30). That messenger is called “a man” (v 24).
- When Joshua was preparing to assault Jericho, an angel appeared before him, identifying himself as “the captain of the Lord’s host.” It is said of him that Joshua saw “a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand” (Josh 5:13-15).
- An angel appeared to Manoah and his wife, announcing they would have a son, whose name would be Samson. He is specifically called “the angel of the Lord,” yet Manoah’s wife referred to him as “a man of God” (Judges 13:6-20).

- An “angel” was sent to deliver Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego from the fiery furnace. He was also referred to as the “fourth man ,” whose appearance was like that of the three he came to deliver (Dan 3:25-26).
- An angel appeared to the women who entered the tomb wherein Jesus had been placed. He is called “the angel” in Matthew 28:3. Mark refers to him as “a young man ” (Mark 16:5).
- Two angels were present when Jesus ascended into heaven in the presence of His disciples, delivering a message to them about the Lord’s return. These angels are referred to as “ two men ” in “white apparel” (Acts 1:10).
- An “angel of God” appeared to Cornelius in a vision. When Cornelius recited the event to Peter he said, “ a man stood before me in bright clothing” (Acts 10:3,30).

A Sign Gracious Consideration

Such appearances are an indication of God’s gracious consideration. Angels have a glory that is frightening to men. When an angel descended from heaven at the tomb of Jesus, he did so in unveiled glory. The impact upon those who saw him was significant. It is written, “And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men ” (Mat 28:2-4).

When Gabriel appeared to Daniel, however, he did so in such a manner as to neutralize the clash of heavenly glory with human frailty. He appeared as a “man,” thereby making his appearance bearable. Even then, however, we will find his presence and message had a significant impact upon the man of God.

CAUSED TO FLY SWIFTLY

“ . . . being caused to fly swiftly . . . ” Other versions read, “came top me in swift flight,” NIV “flying swiftly,” DARBY and “swooped on me in full flight” NJB

The text says Gabriel was “caused” to fly swiftly to Daniel. In other words, his mission was considered of the utmost importance, and could thus be attended by no delay. He must have flown through Satan’s territory in his swift flight. Later, we will read of an angel that was detained by an evil power en route to Daniel (10:13).

Gabriel coming to Daniel with swiftness of flight provides insight into a statement made in Hebrews. “Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire” (Heb 1:7; Psa 104:4). This incident also helps us to understand the involvements of the 147 th Psalm. “He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly ” (Psa 147:15). Here is a word from heaven

being brought to Daniel, and it is coming him swiftly! Both assistance and illumination can come swiftly and with no delay.

It was God Himself who “caused” Gabriel to fly swiftly. We will find this was owing to the physical condition of Daniel as well as the urgency of the message.

HE TOUCHED ME

“ . . . touched me about the time of the evening oblation.” Other versions read, ”he reached me about the time of the evening offering,” NKJV “came to me in my extreme weakness about the time of the evening offering,” NASB and “about the time of the evening sacrifice.” NIV

Because the word translated “swiftly” can also mean “fatigue, or utterly exhausted,” STRONGS the NKJV applies the word to Daniel instead of the fight of the angel Gabriel. One other version also takes this view: “when my weariness was great, put his hand on me.” BBE However, this is not the ordinary view, and is taken only because some have chosen etymology over the message. It is not, in my judgment, a wise translation. Scriptural meanings ought not be established by lexical writings, which are only an extension of human wisdom. Notwithstanding this observation, I am quick to say it represents my opinion, and ought not become a matter of controversy.

Gabriel arrives while Daniel was still “speaking in prayer.” By touching him, Gabriel indicated the answer to the prayer had now arrived, and prayer was no longer required. He had come to deliver the understanding Daniel sought.

The time is specified as “the evening oblation,” or sacrificial offering. An “oblation” is generally understood to be a bloodless offering, although not necessarily so. The word translated “oblation” is frequently translated “offering.” It is used to describe Cain’s offering of grain, as well as Abel’s offering of the firstling of his flock (Gen 4:3-5). A number of time, the word is translated “present,” or a gift offered to another person (Gen 32:13,18, 20,21; 33:10; 43:11). It is also applied to “drink offerings” (Ex 30:9), and “grain (meat) offerings” (Ex 40:39).

The Time of the Sacrifice

In general, the “evening oblation” probably refers to the evening sacrifice which involved both a bloody sacrifice and one of grain, or meal. It is important to note that the revelation does not occur during the sacrifice, but during the “time” of the sacrifice. It had been nearly seventy years since any record of a sacrifice was provided. This sacrifice was made in the tabernacle at the first, and the Temple following the time of Solomon. Yet, the Temple remains in a state of destruction at this time, and there is no indication that sacrifices were being carried out in Babylon.

Right here, Daniel and John the beloved have something in common. Both were away from the ordinary place of assembly: Daniel was in Babylon, and John was on the Isle of Patmos. Both were being deprived of the public benefits vouchsafed to them under the covenant of their time: Daniel of the Temple offerings and John of the weekly assembly. Yet, during the “time of the evening oblation,” Daniel is praying, offering what he can in remembrance of the Lord at the “time of the evening oblation.” John, on the other hand, is “in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (Rev 1:10). Both hear from the Lord while they entered into the spirit of the occasion, even though deprived of its ordinary accompaniments: Daniel hears from Gabriel, and John hears from the Lord Jesus Himself (Rev 1:10-18).

The Time of the Evening Sacrifice

The “evening sacrifice” is mentioned several places (1 Kgs 18:29,36; Ezra 9:4-5; Psa 141:2). The precise time of this offering is not known. The Passover sacrifice occurred “at the going down of the sun,” or about 6:00 P.M. (Deut 16:6). Purported scholars reckon that the Israelites had two evenings in one day. This is derived from the Hebrew expression from which “evening sacrifice” is translated, which means “between the two evenings.” It is thought to have taken place at “the ninth hour of the day, or about three o’clock in the afternoon.” BARNES and JOHN GILL

If the above assessment is correct, it coincides with the time when the Lord Jesus was “made to be sin” for us (2 Cor 5:21). It was around “the ninth hour” when darkness covered the face of the earth, that the ultimate offering for sin was made (Matt 27:45-50) – at the time of the evening offering! I must admit this to be a most arresting consideration, and offer it for your contemplation. In it you sense the direction in which God looks.

HE INFORMED ME

“ 22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.”

Daniel now converses again with the mighty angel Gabriel. Once again, he will be given understanding, but not after an earthly order. This is understanding from the heavenly point of view. All other understanding is superfluous, and of no eternal consequence. In this understanding a central figure will emerge, and it will be the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Time and destinies will be measured by Him.

HE INFORMED ME AND TALKED WITH ME

“And he informed me, and talked with me, and said . . .” Other versions read “he gave me instruction and talked with me,” NASB “he instructed me and said to me,” NIV and “teaching me and talking with me.” BBE

The idea is that Gabriel communicated in words the realities than had been seen in Daniel’s vision. In doing so, he accommodated himself to Daniel, for that is the Divine manner.

Gabriel did not come to impress the prophet with a stirring or exciting sight. Nor, indeed, did he come to produce in him a sensational feeling, or some extraordinary bodily experience. Such things are certainly possible. However, this is a man “greatly beloved,” one with whom God would share His mind, His purpose, and His will. The loftiest of all human experiences take place in the heart and mind, not the body.

It seems to me that when Gabriel began informing Daniel, and taking with him, the words of any person upon earth suddenly became irrelevant. Daniel began experiencing what David has marvelously expressed: “For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand” (Psa 84:10). The “courts of the Lord” are being brought to Daniel, and it has caused the courts of this world to fade and lose their appeal.

COME TO GIVE SKILL AND UNDERSTANDING

“ . . . O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.” Other versions read, “give you skill to understand,” NKJV “give you insight with understanding,” NASB “give you wisdom and understanding,” NRSV “make thee skillful of understanding,” DARBY “ impart to thee understanding,” Septuagint “ teach you how to understand,” NJB and “ cause thee to consider understanding wisely.” YLT

We learn from this that God desires for His people to understand what He is doing. He takes no delight in leaving them in a state of ignorance, or simply satiating their flesh with sensational feelings. Nowhere does God represent Himself as working in such a way with those He loves. When critical understanding is NOT possessed it is described as a judgment, not a blessing (Isa 29:10; Matt 11:25).

Spiritual Understanding

In the matter of spiritual knowledge or understanding specific “skill” is required. Such knowledge has a dimension in which the wisdom of this world is impotent. It is a domain in which Divine assistance is required. There are heavenly determinations and purposes that are hidden to flesh and blood. They cannot be penetrated by natural powers, even though they are most astute and impressive.

Daniel is an excellent example of this. He was a man that excelled in natural endowments, being most gifted. He is described as having an “excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts” (Dan 5:12). “Light and understanding and excellent wisdom” were found in him (Dan 5:14). God had given him “skill in all learning and wisdom” (Dan 1:17). As a youth he was considered “gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand,” who had ability to be taught “the language and literature of the Chaldeans” (Dan 1:4).

Yet, when it came to comprehending some God had already said, and a vision he had already seen, Divine assistance was required. He already had access to a specific revelation recorded in Scripture (9:2). He had already received some extensive explanations from a heavenly messenger (8:16-27). Yet all of that could not cause him to understand what had now been shown to him.

How much less will young men and women of today, armed with lexicons, commentaries, and history books, be able to perceive Divine intentions in Scripture? The time has come for worldly wisdom to be removed from the throne of intellect. Before any measurable spiritual understanding can be realized, the dependency upon God that is driven by faith must be experienced. For some, this is too difficult to be received. However, until this occurs, men will be shut to up an ignorance of the things of God – educated or not.

THE COMMANDMENT CAME FORTH

“ 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee . . . ”

You will sense in Gabriel’s word the desire of the Lord to mature confidence in His people. The angel will speak in such a manner as to promote assurance, calm the heart, and prepare the man of God for profitable understanding.

At the Beginning

Other versions read, “ As soon as you began to pray,” NIV “at the first word of your prayer,” BBE “when your pleading began ,” NJB and “ the moment you began praying.” NLT

It is noteworthy when the prayer of any person causes a heavenly response at the very instant it begins. Paul once prayed three times before he received an answer (2 Cor 12:8-9). Elijah prayed for rain seven times before it came (1 Kgs 18:43). Elijah also prayed three times, asking the Lord to raise a child from the dead (1 Kgs 17:21-22). But here is a prayer that causes an instant response in heaven.

From this it is obvious that the matter concerning which Daniel was making inquiry was especially vital to the people of God. Here was a matter that concerned critical Divine workings. It dealt with things God desired for men to know – even though, from the standpoint of time, the revelations appeared to be premature.

The Commandment Came Forth

Other versions read, “the command went out,” NKJV “the command was issued,” NASB “an answer was given,” NIV and “a word went out.” NRSV

The idea is not merely that the angel was commanded to go to Daniel, but that he received a word that was to be taken to the prophet. Gabriel did not move about on his own. He did not come to the earth until he was given a commandment to do so.

Here is a marvelous example of a truth declared elsewhere. “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry” (Psa 34:15). And again, “Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy; to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine” (Pa 33:18-19). And again, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers” (1 Pet 3:12).

Ponder this text when you consider how Jesus taught us to pray. “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven ” (Mat 6:10). There, the response is instant

I Am Come to Show Thee

Other versions read, “I am come to tell you,” NKJV “I have come to declare it,” NRSV “I have come to give you knowledge,” BBE and “I am come to tell you what it was.” NLT

Here was something determined in heaven, and known among those in heaven. Now the word goes forth to share this knowledge with one who inhabits the earth, in which delusion, ignorance, and death dominate. Gabriel does not come to discuss the vision with Daniel, but to declare its meaning. He does not come to hear what Daniel has to say, but to make known what God has determined.

THOU ART GREATLY BELOVED

“ . . . for thou art greatly beloved . . . ” Other versions read, “for you are highly esteemed,” NASB “for you are a man dearly beloved,” BBE “for thou art a man much loved,” Septuagint “for God loves you very much,” NLT and “for thou art greatly desired.” YLT

Gabriel was not merely sent because Daniel had asked for understanding, but because the prophet was loved very much – “FOR thou art greatly beloved.” Those who are close to the Lord, and endeared because of their faith in Him, will receive more from Him. Thus the Lord said of Abraham, His friend, “And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do” (Gen 18:17).

There is a lot of loose thinking on this subject in the Christian community. Understanding is too often viewed in isolation of the Divine view of the individual. Enough is not said these days about the value of walking in a manner that is “pleasing” to the Lord – “fully pleasing Him” NKJV (Col 1:10), and conducting ourselves as “dear children” (Eph 5:1). Many a soul remains abysmally ignorant of the things of God because they have chosen to live in ways that displease the Lord. If the Lord gives understanding to those who please Him and are greatly loved by Him, He also withholds understanding from those who do not please Him, and even provoke Him.

Although Daniel was probably over eighty years of age, yet he remained precious in the sight of the Lord, and eager to learn of Divine intentions. For that reason, special arrangements were made for him to comprehend things that would take place long after he had left this world.

UNDERSTAND AND CONSIDER

“. . . therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.” Other versions read, “give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision,” NASB “consider the message and understand the vision,” NIV “so give thought to the word and let the vision be clear to you,” BBE “grasp the meaning of the word, understand the vision,” NJB and “Now listen, so you can understand the meaning of your vision.” NLT

The appropriation of understanding will involve more, therefore, than Gabriel simply passing information from heaven to him. The message, supernaturally brought to Daniel, must be considered, or pondered, before it can clarify the vision given to him.

The idea expressed is this: take hold of what I am saying, and it will clarify the vision. As Daniel pondered, contemplated, or thought upon what Gabriel declared, it would shed light upon the vision he had seen, making it understandable.

The Experience of Asaph

This is what is involved in the expression, “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I . . .” (Psa 73:17). Asaph had been envious of the foolish – not because he wanted riches, but because they appeared to be undisturbed, while he suffered the chastening hand of the Lord. As he thought upon the circumstances of the foolish, “it was too painful” for him, disrupting his peace, and disturbing him within. That condition continued “until” he entered “the sanctuary of God.” At precisely that point, he saw the condition of the foolish quite differently. He saw that God had put them into

“slippery places.” Rather than being in an envious position, they were slipping back and forth on the precipice of eternal ruin.

The Situation with Daniel

In Daniel’s case, “the sanctuary of God” is being, so to speak, brought to him. He is going to be given a Divine perspective of things that were beyond his natural understanding. However, to profit from this understanding, he must think upon it, becoming absorbed with the word brought to him. It must begin to dominate his heart and mind.

Our Own Time

This is a time of surface religion – when thought has been dethroned in preference for feeling. The worship of God is not viewed as primarily emotional, with little profound expression, or words that provoke depth of thought and extended meditation. Much of the preaching of our time is not conducive to deliberation, and brevity has become the fashion of the times.

As a consequence, the minds of professing Christians are rarely exposed to truth for any extended period of time. We must have clear minds about this circumstance. Spiritual understanding will not and cannot be cultured in such an environment. Every effort to appropriate the truth must be attended by a love of the truth and a determination to gain the Divine perspective. Further, these traits cannot be developed while men and women, at the best, slide along the surface of the truth, dabbling in it with little interest and on commitment.

Exposure to a little truth for a short time will only inoculate the soul against “the power thereof.”

SEVENTY WEEKS ARE DETERMINED

“ 24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”

This is one of the most arresting texts in all of Scripture. The language used in it speaks loudly of its importance and centrality. Finishing transgression, making an end of sins, making reconciliation

for iniquity, and bringing in everlasting righteousness cannot possibly be casual expressions. They are too closely aligned with matters relating to the Christ and the great salvation He accomplished to be treated with indifference or a lack of interest.

Something to Remember

The fact that this passage has been subjected to contradicting judgments does not mean we should ignore it. Rather, we ought to approach it with the words of Gabriel in mind: “understand the matter, and consider the vision.” We should also take the attitude of Daniel as our example, listening attentively to the words that follow.

DIVINE DETERMINATION

“Seventy weeks are determined . . . ” Other versions read, “Seventy weeks are shortened” DOUAY “Seventy weeks have been fixed,” BBE “Seventy weeks are apportioned out,” DARBY “Seventy weeks are decreed,” NJB and “A period of seventy sets of seven has been decreed.” NLT

This is a matter of Divine appointment. The time is exact, and is cast in stone. “Times” do belong to God, and it is in His power to appoint them blessing or for cursing, for establishment or for destruction (Acts 1:7; 17:26; Eph 1:11). He can (and in this case does) impose “times” upon men, regardless of their agreement or disagreement with His determination.

We are told that Jesus came “in the fulness of the time” (Gal 4:4). That “time” is also called “the time of reformation,” KJV or “the time of the new order” NIV (Heb 9:10). This was a pivotal point in human history, and thus becomes one of the chief keys of this prophecy. It is to be understood that if “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10), then His Person and work is at the heart of all inspired utterance. As He Himself said of the Scriptures, “they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39).

This is a most remarkable prophecy! It speaks of a number of years that is the same in number as the period in which the land was not given her sabbaths – 490 years. However, as we will find, the period is not the same. The first was in the past, the second is in the future. The first was related with Divine judgment, the second with great blessing. The first brought bondage, the second brings liberty. The first resulted in the judgment of a nation, the second with the judgment of a Person.

Weeks of Years

In keeping with a revealed Divine manner, these prophetic weeks consist of years, not days – a day standing for a year. This is how the duration of the wilderness wandering was calculated. “After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise” (Num 14:34). The year of Jubilee was calculated after the same manner, using a day for a year. “And thou shalt number seven

sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years” (Lev 25:8).

Using this method of calculating, the period before us is four-hundred and ninety years. This prophecy deals with a period of 490 years – seventy weeks of years, or seventy times seven. It is broken into three prophetic periods. Seven weeks (9:25a), sixty-two weeks (9:25b), and one week (9:27). Following the day-for-a-year prophetic period (Num 14:34), the periods are 49 years (7 X 7), 434 years (7 X 62), and 7 years (7 X 1). Thus, the entire period is 49 + 434 + 7, or 490 years.

THY PEOPLE AND THY HOLY CITY

“ . . . upon Thy people and upon Thy holy city . . . ” Other versions read, “For Your people and for Your holy city,” NKJV and “about Your people and Your holy city.” ESV

In my understanding, the meaning of this text centers in the preeminence of the Messiah upstaging the prominence of the holy people (Israel), and the holy city (Jerusalem). They would remain at the heart of Divine dealings until the promised Seed would come. At that time, everything would center in Him. In Him, the covenant would no longer center upon words inscribed upon tables of stone, but upon a Person. Thus Isaiah prophesied, “I the LORD have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles ” (Isa 42:6). The same promise is again stated in Isaiah 49:8: “I will preserve Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people , to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.” Following the birth of John the Baptist, his father Zechariah was filled with the Spirit, and also declared the centrality of a Savior over the centrality of Law. His son, the forerunner of Jesus, would prepare the way for the Savior of the world (Lk 1:67-79).

The “seventy weeks,” therefore, are the period of time in which Israel would remain prominent, and Jerusalem the focal point of Divine activity.

This does not mean, as some affirm, that there would be no further involvement of God with Israel. Rather, future involvement would center in Christ Jesus and their relationship to Him.

Now, let us behold what will be accomplished by the coming of the Messiah, the Savior and anointed one of the world. The remarkable details of these accomplishments are themselves proof of their inspiration. To this very day, there remain great numbers of professing Christians that have yet seen what was accomplished by the Messiah.

FINISH THE TRANSGRESSION

“ . . . to finish the transgression . . . ”

All standard translations use these words: “finish the transgression.” A few versions tend to garble what is affirmed by the Spirit. The NIV adds the footnote, “restrain” the transgression. Other variant translations include, “to let wrongdoing be complete,” BBE “to close the transgression,” DARBY “to put down rebellion,” NLT “until the measure of transgression is filled,” TNK and “to shut up the transgression.” YLT

Two different views are taken on this verse, and they are reflected in the various translations of it.

- One is that an end will be made of transgression itself. That is, that the people will no longer live in sin.
- The other is that the punishment for sin will conclude, or the period of chastening will come to an end.

The first view is the proper one, That is, as a result of the coming Messiah, the tendency to transgress would, in Him, be brought to an end. There would be a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), in which men have their stony heart removed, and a new and pliable heart of flesh be given to them (Ezek 11:19; 36:26). By putting His laws “into their minds” and writing them “in their hearts” (Heb 8:10), God would transform the people, causing them to walk in His statutes (Ezek 36:27). Those in covenant with God through the Christ would no longer be noted for sinning.

MAKE AN END OF SINS

“ . . . and to make an end of sins . . . ” Other versions read, “to put an end to sin,” NIV “sin come to its full limit,” BBE “Sin may have an end,” DOUAY “for sin to be ended,” Septuagint and “seal up sins.” YLT

Here the idea is that of bring an end to the reign of sin. It would be toppled from the throne so that men would no longer be enslaved by it, being “servants of sin” and “free from righteousness” (Rom 6:17,20).

This is a prophetic declaration of the taking away of the sins of the world (John 1:29). The scape-goat of heaven would bear them into an uninhabitable land, where they would be remembered “no more” (Lev 16:10-22; Heb 8:12).

MAKE RECONCILIATION FOR INIQUITY

“ . . . and to make reconciliation for iniquity . . . ” Other versions read, “make atonement for iniquity,” NASB “atone for wickedness,” NIV “clearing away the evil doing,” BBE “make expiation for iniquity,” DARBY “iniquity may be abolished,” DOUAY “atone for guilt,” NLT and “to cover iniquity.”

This declares the means by which sin would be done away, expiated, or removed from Divine consideration. Apostolic doctrine elaborates on this marvelous accomplishment. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin . . .” (2 Cor 5:21). And again, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal 3:13). And again, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet 2:24).

From another perspective, this was God Himself laying upon Christ “the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6). It was Jesus suffering for our sins, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God” (1 Pet 3:18). It was God in Christ Jesus “reconciling the world unto Himself” (2 Cor 5:18-20).

Sin could not be taken away by chastening the sinner, as Israel was chastened in the Babylonian captivity. No amount of punishment exacted upon the transgressor can atone for sin. Isaiah foretold the means by which reconciliation would be made. “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:4-6).

Here, in a moment of heavenly explanation, and nearly five hundred and fifty years before it would occur, Daniel is given the privilege of knowing how the Messiah would make reconciliation for the sins of the people. It would not be by punishing the sinner, but by punishing the sin-bearer. It would not be by cursing the transgressor, but by cursing the One upon whom the transgressions were placed.

BRING IN EVERLASTING RIGHTEOUSNESS

“ . . . and to bring in everlasting righteousness . . .” Nearly all translations read the same way. Some variant readings include the following. “The coming in of eternal righteousness,” BBE “to bring in the righteousness of the ages,” DARBY “everlasting justice may be brought,” DOUAY “introducing everlasting uprightness,” NJB “eternal righteousness ushered in,” TNK and “bring in righteousness age-during.” YLT

If ever men were going to become righteous, righteousness would have to be brought in. At the time of Daniel, sin had reigned uncontested for around 3,500 years. It had prevailed to such an extent that the Divine assessment was, “there is none righteous, no not one” (Rom 3:10). Men have to be “made righteous.”

Because Jesus effectively took away the sins of the world, God is now the “Justifier” of those who

believe on His Son – and He is “Just” in doing so (Rom 3:26). Now, having put the believer in Christ Jesus, God makes Jesus to be “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). From another perspective, He imputes His own righteousness to those believing on His Son. As it is written, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works” (Rom 4:6).

This is the righteousness that is proclaimed in the Gospel – a righteousness is from God, and is obtained through faith (Rom 1:17; 3:21-22). It is “everlasting righteousness” because it is God’s own righteousness, which is the only righteousness He accepts. Jesus “brought” it in, making the righteousness of God accessible to all who believe the record He has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11).

SEAL UP THE VISION AND PROPHECY

“ . . . and to seal up the vision and prophecy . . .” Other versions read, “To seal up vision and prophecy,” NKJV “to seal both vision and prophet,” NRSV “so that the vision and the word of the prophet may be stamped as true,” BBE “and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled,” DOUAY “setting the seal on vision and on prophecy,” NJB “to confirm the prophetic vision,” NLT and “and prophetic vision ratified.” TNK

This sealing does not refer to a concealment of the prophecy, but to its predetermined fulfillment. What has been made known about the coming Messiah is so sure the prophecy and vision can be stamped with a seal just as though it had already been fulfilled. There is no possibility that it would not happen – that the Messiah would not come in the fulness of the time, bringing newness of heart and spirit, taking away the sins of the world, satisfying the righteous demands of God, and bringing everlasting righteousness within the reach of fallen humanity.

This is precisely the point Peter makes in his second Epistle. “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Pet 1:19).

Jesus came to fulfill all of the marvelous prophecies of a coming Savior – to place the seal of confirmation upon them all.

ANOINT THE MOST HOLY

“ . . . and to anoint the most Holy.” Other versions read, “anoint the most holy place,” NASB “Anoint the most hone One,” NIV “to put the holy oil on a most holy place,” BBE “to anoint the holy of holies,” DARBY and “the Saint of saints may be anointed.” DOUAY

Here there is a significant difference in the translations. Some have the Holy Place being anointed. Others, the Holy of Holies. Still others, the Messiah, or Holy One Himself. First, this cannot refer to the anointing of the Messiah Himself, for He did not anoint Himself. It is written that “ God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” (Acts 10:38).

The vision and the prophecy related to men having access to God through an effective Mediator. In covenantal words, “And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me , from the least to the greatest” (Heb 8:11). This is nothing less than entrance into the Most Holy place – the holy of holies. Our bold access to the throne of grace is involved in this. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

This refers to “the new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb 10:20). By anointing the holy place, Jesus has cleansed or sanctified it for our entrance. Now the sons of God may traffic in the place formerly forbidden to them. It has been sprinkled with His blood, purifying “heavenly things” for the use of the redeemed of the Lord (Heb 9:23).

Thus, within four hundred and ninety years, the greatest achievements in the history of the world will be accomplished by the Messiah! The determination was made, and nothing could stop it from happening.

- **A MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CHANGE.** The transgression would be “finished.” No more would sin dominate the people. They would be made new, recreated, and given a new heart and spirit.
- **THE REIGN OF SIN WOULD END.** An end would be made of sin. It would be taken away, cast behind God’s back (Isa 38:17), and thrown into the depths of the sea (Mic 7:19).
- **RECONCILIATION WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED.** A satisfactory atonement would be made for sin, making it “just ” for God to receive men to Himself.
- **RIGHTEOUSNESS BROUGHT IN.** Everlasting righteousness would be brought from heaven to men, causing them to be acceptable to God, and capable of walking in fellowship with Him.
- **FULFILLMENT AND CONFIRMATION OF VISION AND PROPHECY.** All of the marvelous visions and prophecies of a Savior are fulfilled in Christ. He is the Prophet, Foundation Stone, King, and Hiding Place. He is everything that has been promised, and everything that we need.
- **THE WAY TO GOD HAS BEEN SANCTIFIED.** Jesus has anointed the most holy place for the sons of men. They can come as often as they want, stay as long as they want, and receive as much as they desire.

All of this is a sort of summation, exposing us to much more than at first appears. When I consider that all of this was made known to Daniel over half a century before the Messiah came, it once again confirms how eager the Lord is for us to know these things.

SEVEN WEEKS AND SIXTY-TWO WEEKS

“ 25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”

Daniel is old, and his time in this world is drawing to a close. It appears from history that Daniel passed from this vale of tears about four years after Gabriel’s visitation. A worldly wise person might consider such a marvelous revelation to be wasted on such an aged man. However, rather than being wasted, here was a faithful man who had a heart to appreciate what he was told, and could be counted on to write it down for succeeding generations.

What a wonderful benefit to have your final days upon the earth times of your greatest blessing! Simeon’s days drew to a close when he has seen the salvation of God (Lk 2:26-29). The closing part of Ann’s life was the time when redemption came (Lk 2:38). And now, we read of Daniel who received his greatest insight after nearly seventy years of productive ministry.

THE COMMANDMENT TO RESTORE AND BUILD JERUSALEM

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem . . .”

Gabriel now defines the time more precisely, informing Daniel of the precise time of its beginning. The “seventy weeks” that have been determined for the people will commence from the time when the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem was issued.

Because of what was accomplished in his time, I am going to assign this time to the commissioning of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was during their time that the Temple was cleansed and the priesthood restored.

The time of Ezra’s commission is considered to be 456 B.C. That was the beginning of the real restoration.

The record of the commissioning of Ezra is found in Ezra 7:8-9. "And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. For upon the first day of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him" (Ezra 7:8-9).

UNTO THE MESSIAH THE PRINCE

" . . . unto the Messiah the Prince . . ." The point of this prophecy is the coming to "Messiah the Prince." This does not refer to His second coming, as some suppose. We know this is so, because it is expressly said in this prophecy that He was coming to deal with sin: finish the transgression, make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity (9:24). Of His second coming it is written, "so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin , to those who eagerly await Him" (Heb 9:28).

Beside this, the term "Messiah" refers to Christ in His salvational capacity, not to His return in glory with all of the holy angels. The word "Messiah" is used four times in our English Bibles (Dan 9:25-26; John 1:41; 4:25). John's Gospel provides additional information, saying "Messiah," being interpreted, is "the Christ" (John 1:41). Of the 555 times that "Christ" is used in Scripture, none are used independently of His redemptive work. Our text, therefore, refers to the time when Jesus in His salvational capacity would be revealed.

From the commission to rebuild Jerusalem (456 B.C.) to the appearance of the Messiah would be sixty-two prophetic weeks, or 483 years. That would calculate to be A.D. 27 (456 +27 = 483).

It is generally conceded that Jesus was born in 4 B.C. He would have been one in 3 B.C., two in 2 B.C., three in 1 B.C. and 27 years later in 27 A.D. He would have been 30 years old. This is the exact year of his baptism when He was anointed, that is, when He became the Messiah. As it is written, "Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age" NASB (Luke 3:23). Jesus was not the Messiah when He was born. From that time He was the Son of God. However, He became the Messiah when He was "anointed," and thus began His minister. He did not become the Messiah when he was born. He has always been the Son of God but he became the Messiah when He was anointed. That anointing commenced His ministry as declared in Acts 10:38. "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" NKJV (Acts 10:38).

SEVEN WEEKS AND SIXTY-TWO WEEKS

" . . . shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks . . . "

The sixty-nine weeks are divided into two groups. They are a seven-week period, and a sixty-two-week period. Using the prophetic formula of a day for a year, that would be a forty-nine year period (7 X 7), and a four hundred and thirty-four year period (62 X 7).

The commission to rebuild the city occurred in 456 B.C., and the city was finished in 407 B.C. – forty-nine years later, shortly before the death of Nehemiah (405 B.C.). From 407 B.C. until A.D. 27 is 343 years, thus making up the sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years from the beginning of the rebuilding project until the anointing of the Lord Jesus.

THE STREET AND THE WALL REBUILT

“ . . . the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”

The period during which the building was accomplished is covered in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and it was a time of much trouble.

They were “troublous times,” indeed! The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the long period of difficulties met in accomplishing the completion of the city. In those books we read of “the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin” (Ezra 4:1-24), Sanballat and Tobiah (Neh 2:10), Geshem (Neh 2:19), the Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites (Neh 4:7), and Noadia and her prophets (Neh 6:14). The city was, indeed, built in “troublous times, just as Gabriel said it would be.

Once again, the 7 weeks or 49 years refer to this period beginning with 456 B.C. then the 62 weeks follow, or 434 years of waiting until the appearance of Messiah. It is the accuracy of this time prophecy which has caused Talmudic Jews to place Daniel in the writings rather than the prophets in the Jewish division of the Old Testament.

The remarkable precision of this prophecy is most arresting. Even though there is some variance of opinion as to the use of calendars and other such matters, the figures still come out exactly as Gabriel said. Forty-nine years from the commission to rebuild Jerusalem until it was completed, and 434 years from the completion of the building to the appearance of the Messiah: 483 years!

MESSIAH WILL BE CUT OFF

“ 2 6a And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself.”

Here is a prophecy of the death of the Lord Jesus – when He was “cut off out of the land of the living” (Isa 53:8). Prior to Christ’s coming, there were allusions to the death of the coming Messiah – but not many.

- Satan would bruise His heel (Gen 3:15; Lk 22:53).
- His feelings and cries upon the cross expressed (Psa 22:1-18; Matt 26:59-65; 27:46;).
- Reference to His bones not being broken upon the cross (Psa 34:20; John 19:36).
- Prophecy that they would give him vinegar to drink (Psa 69:21; John 19:29).
- He would be persecuted when God Himself had stricken Him (Psa 69:26; Mark 15:28-32).
- They would look at Him in His death and wag their heads (Psa 109:25; Matt 27:39).
- His disfigurement (Isa 52:14; Matt 26:67).
- Cut off out of the land of the living (Isa 53:8; Acts 8:33)
- He would be “pierced” (Zech 12:10; 13:6; John 19:14-16; Acts 2:23).

Yet, there was not much specificity in the above references. In fact, they were so vague that when Jesus began to bring up His death, His own disciples were offended (Matt 16:21-22; John 16:5-17). And, when He died, His closest disciples were able to associate His death with the prophecies that seem apparent to those in this day of salvation (Lk 24:17-24). Now Daniel, greatly beloved, will be given some insight concerning the Messiah’s death. It would be a vicarious, or substitutionary death.

THREESCORE AND TWO WEEKS

“And after threescore and two weeks . . .” Again, the sixty-two week period, or four hundred and thirty four year segment, is mentioned. Over four centuries will pass AFTER the rebuilding of Jerusalem before the Messiah comes. For many, that would make the matter irrelevant. But it was important to Daniel, even though it was well outside the perimeter of his life.

MESSIAH CUT OFF

“ . . . shall Messiah be cut off . . .” Other versions read, “the Anointed one will be cut off,” NIV

“one on whom the holy oil has been put will be cut off,” BBE “Christ shall be slain,” DOUAY “An Anointed One put to death,” NJB “the Anointed One will be killed,” NLT and “the Anointed One will disappear and vanish.” TNK

The words “cut off” suggest a sudden and violent death. From an earthly perspective, His life was terminated in its prime – something the Jews could not associate with a coming Prince and Savior, and Seed of David.

Remember, this is not a history lesson, but a proclamation of Divine determination. In other words, God had determined that the Messiah would be “cut off.” When Jesus was here, He clearly said He was sent o “lay down” His life – to submit to being “cut off.”

NOT FOR HIMSELF

“ . . . but not for himself.” Other versions read, “and have nothing,” NASB , “and will have nothing,” NIV “and have no . . . ,” BBE “and the people that shall deny Him shall not be His,” DOUAY “and there is no judgment in Him,” Septuagint “put to death without His . . . ,” NJB and “appearing to have accomplished nothing.” NLT

As you can see, several of the versions greatly confuse the text. The Basic Bible English and New Jerusalem Bible represent the sentence as being broken off, without an ending – like Moses’ expression in Exodus 32:32. Others suggest He died without any apparent accomplishments. NLT Some suggest in His death a separation occurred between Him and His people. DOUAY

LIKE THE WICKED. The language declares his would be like that of the wicked – having the appearance of a transgressor. It is said of the wicked, “For evildoers shall be cut off” (Psa 37:9). And again, “But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth” (Prov 2:22). The Messiah would, in this sense, as well as in His burial, be “numbered with the transgressors” (Isa 53:12). He would be suddenly and violently pulled up out of the earth as though He was a sinner.

WITHOUT A GENERATION. He would also be “cut off” without a generation in the flesh of His own. Thus Isaiah reasons, “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation ? for He was cut off out of the land of the living” (Isa 53:8a). From Adam there were succeeding generations leading up to Jesus (Lk 3:23-38) – yet there was no fleshly generation after Him.

After saying this, however, Isaiah affirms the meaning of our text, declaring it quite succinctly: “for the transgression of my people was He stricken” (Isa 53:8). His was a vicarious death.

His death was not because of any sin of His own. There was no cause for His death in His own person. Rather, He dies vicariously, in the behalf of others. This is the meaning of the text.

THE CITY AND SANCTUARY DESTROYED

“ 26b . . . and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”

Suddenly, Gabriel makes an association of the death of Messiah with something that will follow that death.

THEY WILL DESTROY

“ . . . and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary . . . ” Other versions read, “and the troops of the prince who is to come,” NRSV “and a people, with their leader, that shall come,” DOUAY “city and sanctuary ruined by a prince who is to come,” NJB “a ruler will arise whose armies will destroy the city and the Temple,” NLT and “The army of a leader who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” TNK

The city is Jerusalem, and the sanctuary is the Temple. Daniel relates their destruction to the death of the Messiah. There is no need for speculation on this matter, for Jesus spoke of this destruction, and did so at great length.

The destruction was appointed because the Jews rejected the Lord Jesus. “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation ” (Luke 19:44). Matthew records Jesus saying this assault would leave the Temple without one stone being left upon another (Matt 24:2). He also said their house, which was Jerusalem and the Temple, would be left “desolate” (Matt 23:37-38).

ENDED WITH A FLOOD

“ . . . and the end thereof shall be with a flood . . . ” These words speak of utter desolation or devastation – like an overwhelming flood. By this Gabriel confirms there is no hope that this destruction

can be avoided. As we now know, it was a Divine judgment for rejecting their own Christ, for which they had been prepared. This time, when “the enemy comes in like a flood ,” the Lord would not raise up a standard against him (Isa 59:19). Jeremiah also spoke of an overriding enemy in this way. “Egypt riseth up like a flood , and his waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, and will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof” (Jer 46:8). Amos used thew same kind of language. “And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood ; and shall be drowned, as by the flood of Egypt” (Amos 9:5).

DESOLATIONS ARE DETERMINED

“ . . . and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” Other versions read, “till the end of the war desolations are determined,” NKJV “even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined,” NASB “War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.” NIV

The meaning is that Jerusalem will not merely endure an assault – one from which it can quickly recover. The utter desolation of the city has been determined by the God who has been offended by its rejection of His Son.

Jesus referred to this prophecy when He warned His disciples, “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh” (Luke 21:20).

This is the destruction of Jerusalem that took place in A.D. 70. The enemy causing the desolation was the Roman army, and the “prince,” or leader, was Titus Vespasian. In celebration of his plundering of Judea, Titus issued the commemorative coin shown above. Revealing the significance or the coming Messiah, Gabriel informs Daniel of the devastation that will come upon Jerusalem and the Temple because the people “received Him not” (John 1:11). God is still sensitive about such rejection, and we ought to be sensitive to that!

THE COVENANT CONFIRMED WITH MANY

“ 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

Here is a section of Scripture that has been greatly distorted. Even though Gabriel has affirmed a period of seventy weeks, some have said there is a massive gap between the sixty-ninth and seventh week, putting this part of the text at the end of time. However, if this is true, then this is not a seventy week prophecy as Gabriel declared.

In dealing with this verse, I will assume the continued priority of the Messiah. I cannot conceive of a sudden switch in emphasis to the heralding of the Antichrist in this passage.

THE COVENANT CONFIRMED FOR ONE WEEK

“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week . . . ”

Gabriel now returns to a consideration of the Messiah, who is the Subject of this prophecy. He, and He alone, is the “spirit of prophecy,” and the them of Scripture (Rev 19:10; John 5:39).

The language in this passage bears some similarities to the text in the eighth chapter, which spoke of the wickedness of Antiochus Epiphanes, who also caused sacrifices to cease (8:11-13). The wording, however, was quite different in the eighth chapter. There the sacrifices were taken away from God Himself. Here, the Messiah causes tem to cease through His own vicarious death.

“He,” the Messiah, will confirm the covenant, not the prince who destroys the city. Viewing the “he” as the prince and his armies causes the prophecy to cease being a 490 year prophecy, as the seventieth week is yet to come. Incredibly some see in this text the last seven years of the history of the world and Antichrist. But this is a 70 week prophecy, The last week refers to the seven years following A.D., or it is not a 70 week prophecy. That seven-year period would be approximately from A.D. 27 until A.D. 34.

The “covenant” of reference is the New Covenant, which He ratified with His own blood (Matt 26:28; Heb 10:29; 13:20).

“With Many”

Jesus Himself confirmed the covenant “with many.” I take the word “many” to stand for all, as it does in the fifth chapter of Romans (5:15,19). It is also used to stand for all who are in Christ (Rom 6:3; 8:14,29).

“For One Week”

The confirmation of the New Covenant is said to extend over a period of one week – the last week of the seventy-week determination. It is generally agreed that from the beginning of Christ’s ministry until the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was seven years. Of this is true, the confirmation of the covenant would refer to establishing that both Jew and Gentile were brought together within the covenant. This is a significant point in Scripture. Jesus made a point of it when He said, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16). Paul declared this was an eternal purpose – a mystery that has not been unveiled, and is being brought to fulfillment. “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, 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; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel ” (Eph 3:4-6).

It is my understanding that the confirmation of the covenant refers to the establishment of this purpose, which was exceedingly difficult for the early church to grasp.

IN THE MIDST OF THE WEEK

“ . . . and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease . . . ”

The real significance of the last week is found in this reference – “the midst of the week.” This is a reference to Messiah being “cut off,” and to the effect of that death upon the Jewish economy. Jesus caused the sacrifices and oblations to cease by offering a superior sacrifice. When that sacrifice was found pleasing to God, it invalidated all other sacrifices for sin, causing them to cease before God.

HE SHALL MAKE IT DESOLATE

“ . . . and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate . . . ” Other versions read, “And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate,” NKJV “And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him,” NIV “and in their place shall be an abomination that desolates, until the decreed end is poured out upon the desolator,” NRSV “and in its place will be an unclean thing causing fear; till the destruction which has been fixed is let loose on him who has made waste.” BBE

The thought is this: after Jesus has obviated the sacrifices commanded by the Law, the door will be opened for the conquering hordes of Rome. In the place where commanded sacrifices had formerly been offered, abominations would not be placed. This is the “abomination of desolation” to which Jesus referred in Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14). When the people saw that abomination, then they were to quickly flee from the city, for its time of judgment had come. Thus Jesus said, “But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains: and let him that is on the housetop not go down into the house, neither enter therein, to take any thing out of his house: and let him that is in the field not turn back again for to take up his garment” (Mark 13:14-16).

Messiah came to bring and confirm a New Covenant. That confirmation would be accomplished in the seven years following Jesus' baptism in 27 A.D. The rest of 27 (28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33), would make 30 A.D., the midst of the week. It is the year Messiah was cut off, but not for himself, as verse 26 affirms. Consequently, when Jesus made the sacrifice and the oblation non effective. He caused it to cease in effectiveness. Once Jesus died on the cross lambs can be offered by the millions, but they have no validity – they are desolate. Jesus made the Temple worship desolate at the cross and it would remain desolate. That is why the Temple veil was violently ripped in two from the top of the bottom when He died (Mark 15:38).

When the Temple was destroyed some years later by the Roman armies, they formally desolated what had already been made desolate by Jesus in His death. What remarkable coincidence is in this wonderful 70 week prophecy. No human could have devised this before the events declared transpired. The hand of the Lord is obvious in these things. It is a faith-building prophecy.

UNTIL THE CONSUMMATION

“ . . . even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” Other versions read, “Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate,” NKJV and “even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate,” NASB

The idea is that the enemies who attack Jerusalem with aggressiveness until every jot and tittle of God's word against the city is brought to fulfillment. Not a single aspect of it will fall to the ground, but everything will come to pass. The thought is this: after Jesus has obviated the sacrifices commanded by the Law, the door will be opened for the conquering hordes of Rome. In the place where commanded sacrifices had formerly been offered, abominations would not be placed.

CONCLUSION

Thus we come to the end of this remarkable passage of Scripture. The exact time of Christ's death is foretold, together with why He died, and the impact that death would have upon the whole Temple order. We should learn from this that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God (Heb 10:31). Take that to heart!

The Prophecy of Daniel

A SPECIAL THING IS REVEALED TO DANIEL

Lesson # 30

INTRODUCTION

Because Daniel is “greatly beloved,” the Living God has vouchsafed to him insight concerning the coming Redeemer. Looming on the horizon One was coming who would lay down His life a ransom for many. He would do so in a timely manner, or in the fulness of the time. He would bring to an end the administration of the First Covenant, which was “weak through the flesh” (Rom 8:3) – a covenant which, though given by God Almighty, left Him “finding fault” with those with whom it was made (Heb 8:8).

Daniel is told that the coming Messiah would be “cut off” four hundred and eighty-seven years from the command to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple – in the middle of the seventy-week prophecy given to him. Commensurate with that appointed death, sacrifices and Temple statutes that were ordained of God ceased. The statutes themselves had been in force for 1,500 years. Bloody sacrifices had

been in place from the beginning of time. The first animal sacrifice was made by God Himself, in order that He might give to Adam and Eve “coats of skin” (Gen 3:21). The first recorded sacrifice made by a man was that of Abel (Gen 4:4). That sacrifice is said to have been respected, or regarded, by the God of heaven. For nearly four thousand years, animal sacrifices continued, being offered by every person who had faith in God. Prior to the Law these included Noah (Gen 8:20), Abraham (Gen 15:9-10; 22:13), Isaac (Gen 26:25), and Jacob (Gen 31:54; 46:1). From the time of the exodus, and under the Law, animal sacrifices increased in both their number and the times in which they were offered. But when the life of Jesus was “cut off,” the entire sacrificial system – ordained by God – was abruptly terminated. They were replaced by the superior sacrifice what God had appointed before the foundation of the world. He caused “the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” (9:27). He then “confirmed” a “better covenant, established upon better promises” (9:27; Heb 9:6). That covenant was ratified and put in force by the blood of Jesus Christ – by His vicarious death.

All of that has now been proclaimed and clarified in the Gospel, through which faith comes to us (Rom 10:17). However, this glorious Gospel in embryo speaks of things that took place about five-hundred years after Daniel’s death. There are at least two things that can be observed in this circumstance.

- First, behold how “greatly beloved” Daniel was! His tender heart and submissive spirit so endeared him to God that He shared “secret” things with him, and showed him “His covenant” (Psa 25:14). As in the case of Abraham, God did not hide from Daniel the thing that He was going to do (Gen 18:17-19). It is ever true, “His secret is with the righteous” (Prov 3:32). Daniel, because he is “greatly beloved,” has therefore been “given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 13:11). Therefore Gabriel said to him, “As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed” NIV (9:23).
- Second, the Lord desires to make His purpose known. He not only shares His secret with those who are righteous and beloved, He does so because He wants to – it is His nature to do so. The saints are described as those to whom God “has chosen to make known” NIV things that formerly were mysteries (Col 1:26-27). This is particularly true regarding the Messiah, the Savior of the world. Before Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden, God revealed the coming of One who would crush the head of Satan (Gen 3:15). He spoke extensively to His friend Abraham concerning a miraculous offspring through whom the world would be blessed (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). He also divulged His intention to David (2 Sam 7:11-16; Acts 2:30). Repeatedly, the great God of heaven spoke of the coming Redeemer through the Prophets, referring to “a righteous Branch” (Jer 23:5), “wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of peace” (Isa 9:6), a “Commander of the people” (Isa 55:4), the “Desire of all nations” (Hag 2:7), “Immanuel” (Isa 7:14), “A Light to the Gentiles” (Isa 42:6), and a Man who would be “as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa 32:2). God has a desire to communicate His purpose. In Daniel He found a man with whom He could profitably share that purpose. How about you?

In these days, enough cannot be said about these two things: being “greatly beloved,” and God’s desire to share His heart and mind with men. Too often religion is man-centered. The Scriptures, faith, salvation, and the New Covenant are approached as though man was the center of it all. Thus the problems of humanity tend to be accentuated, and purported problem-solvers rise to the top of the

religious heap. But God Himself is really at the heart of things. It is His desires that are primarily met in Christ Jesus. It is His purpose that Jesus fulfilled on the cross, and is now fulfilling at God's right hand. In salvation, God is not merely solving a problem, but executing an "eternal purpose."

That purpose has eternal ramifications. It does not terminate in or with this world. It does not reach its apex in the removal of sin, but includes bringing in "everlasting righteousness" (9:24). It is not fully realized when those enslaved by the devil are liberated from the tyranny of sin, but includes them receiving the kingdom in all of its glory and fulness (Dan 7:27). When all is said and done, and the world has passed away, "in the ages to come," God will "show the exceeding riches of His grace toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:7). Glory will be brought to God "in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph 3:21). Daniel has been given to see portions of this great purpose. At some point, our religion must extend beyond this world.

A PRELUDE TO CHAPTERS ELEVEN AND TWELVE

The tenth chapter of Daniel is a prelude to chapters eleven and twelve. In it, the prophet tells us how the vision given to him affected him, and some of the heavenly circumstances related to him receiving it. Revealing some of the complexities associated with getting a message from heaven to earth, an holy angel makes known to Daniel "what is written in the book of truth" NIV (10:21). The magnitude of this revelation is seen in the circumstances attending it – the glory and majesty of the messenger, and the staggering impact it has upon the man of God. The content and affects of this vision are anything but ordinary.

THE THIRD YEAR OF CYRUS

" 10:1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision."

Among other things, our text teaches us to properly assess our own lives. Outwardly, the life of Daniel was lived in a political arena. Nebuchadnezzar made him "a great man," making him "ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon" (2:48). He was "master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers" (5:11). Belshazzar made him "the third ruler in the kingdom" (5:29). Darius made him the first of three presidents. He so favored him that he "thought to set him over the whole realm" (6:2). He was prominent in the government, and prospered over a period of more than seventy years, from Nebuchadnezzar through the reign of Cyrus (1:21) – serving during the successive prominence of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires.

How will such an individual record the events of his life? One can only imagine the sort of books that would be written by such a man today. The inner workings of government, critical political decisions, the weaknesses and strengths of political strategies, and the likes, would be splashed across the literary world. I can see now: “My experiences in Nebuchadnezzar’s court,” “The unique differences of the Persian empire,” and “How I survived during the reigns of four different kings.”

But this is not how Daniel writes. He is being moved along by the Holy Spirit of God (2 Pet 1:21), and thus is not writing a mere recap of his own life. The pinnacle experiences that he describes are those in which he received revelations from God. The times that he particularly notes are those during which he was in communication with heaven.

Exactly the same thing may be observed in the writings of Moses, David, the holy Prophets, and the Apostles. With unwavering consistency, their writings focus on Divine communication, not human experience. The affairs of men are always secondary. Even when they are mentioned, they are considered within the greater context of Divine purpose.

One of the marks of a deteriorating generation is the vaunting of things pertaining to men – whether they are desires and satisfaction, problems and their resolution, or impressive achievements. When such things are enthroned in human consideration, God and His purpose are pushed into the background. In such a context, health, wealth, ease and comfort, and prosperity are given undue prominence. In such a case, the heavens become like brass (Deut 28:23), God hides Himself (Isa 45:15), and spiritual famine sets in (Amos 8:11).

If God is going to work among men for their advantage, His own purpose must become prominent, His fellowship sought, and His Word and will highly valued. If these things do not occur, spiritually dry times will dominate. Convenient explanations for such spiritual poverty may be developed by men. They may say, for example, that God no longer works in this way or that way. But the truth of the matter is that God does not work marvelously and profitably where He Himself and His purpose are disdained or put into the background of thought.

Now, behold how Daniel speaks of his experience. He will tell us of the time when he sought the Lord, his prayer was heard, and understanding was given to him concerning the working of the Lord. When such occasions are highly valued, they will occur with greater frequency, and in enlarged measures.

THE THIRD YEAR

“ 1a In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia . . . ”

The previous revelation took place during “the first year of Darius” (9:1-2). That is estimated to have been around B.C. 538, whereas the third year of Cyrus is thought to have been B.C. 534, four years later.

Previously, the prominence of Daniel was traced from Nebuchadnezzar “unto the first year of king Cyrus” (1:21). That “first year” is said to have been the time when God stirred up Cyrus’ spirit to make a proclamation, around B.C. 536, or two years after Babylon was overthrown by Darius the Mede. “Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, ‘Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God of heaven given me; and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? The LORD his God be with him, and let him go up’” (2 Chr 36:23; Ezra 1:1-2) . At that time, Cyrus called for volunteers to return to Judah for the commencement of the project for which God has raised him up. “Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:3). In that “first year,” Cyrus made a decree to “build the house of God,” and to return the vessels Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple, and from which Belshazzar drank on the evening his kingdom was stripped from him (Ezra 5:13-14; 6:3-4). At that time 42,360 people returned to Judah, with 7,337 maids and servants, 200 singing men and women, 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 asses (Ezra 2:64-66).

The relevance of this to our text is that Daniel did not return to Judah during that time. God kept him in Babylon where He would deliver to him remarkable insights concerning the future. Thus, the man who prayed so fervently for Jerusalem was not himself allowed to return there. It is as though the revelation now given to him provides a reward for his willing and submissive spirit, as the Lord communes with him in the province of Babylon.

A THING WAS REVEALED

“ 1b . . . a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar . . . ” Other versions read “a message,” NKJV “a revelation,” NIV “a word,” NRSV “a secret,” BBE “another vision,” NLT and “an oracle.” TNK

Men Cannot Schedule Revelation

It is important to note that men cannot schedule revelation. A godly man like Daniel revealed in the truth. Yet, he could not cause insights to be given to him, even though he was “greatly beloved.”

The previous revelation occurred four years before this, in the first year of Darius the Mede (9:1), around B.C. 536. The interpretation of Belshazzar’s vision of a writing hand took place around the same time. Prior to that, a vision was given to Daniel in the third year of Belshazzar’s reign, around B.C. 548. Before that, in the first year of Belshazzar, around B.C. 550, a vision was given to him (8:1). Prior to

that, Daniel was granted the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's vision of a tree that was cut down (4:20-26). This was around B.C. 570. Before that, He was granted an understanding concerning Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image (2:31-45). That occurred around B.C. 604. Notice how sporadic the revelations appear that were given to Daniel.

- B.C. 604 : The interpretation of the vision of the great image.
- B.C. 570 : The interpretation of the tree that was cut down – 34 years later .
- B.C. 550 : The vision of the four beasts during the first year of Belshazzar – 20 years later.
- B.C. 548 : The vision of the ram and the he-goat during the third year of the reign of Belshazzar – 2 years later.
- B.C. 538 : The vision and message concerning the seventy weeks – 10 years later.
- B.C. 534 : The vision and interpretation now under consideration – 4 years later.

Here is a classic example of the manner in which revelations were given prior to the removal of sin and the administration of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit reveals this manner in a very succinct way. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb 1:1). Other versions read "various times and various ways," NKJV "many portions and many ways," NASB and "many times and various ways." NIV

Notice how this is fulfilled in the revelations given to Daniel.

Sundry times. Over a period of sixty eight years six revelations were given to Daniel. The gaps between them were 34 years, 20 years, 2 years, 10 years, and 4 years. That is "sundry times!"

Divers manners, or ways. God spoke to Daniel through the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, the vision of Belshazzar, and insights given to him. He received visions, and visits from angels. None of them could be scheduled upon earth, nor was there a pattern to them that could be discerned by men.

All of this emphasizes why the things of God are to be held as precious. When our understanding is opened, every effort must be expended to keep what has been committed to us. During a time in history when Divine communications were very sparse, it is written, "And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision" (1 Sam 3:1). Other versions emphasize precisely why every word of God was precious: "there was no widespread revelation," NKJV "visions were infrequent," NASB "there were not many visions," NIV and "visions were uncommon." NJB

I can only imagine the high value of the words sent to Daniel from heaven. His mind must have often been dominated by them. How the children of God should rejoice today for the abundance of truth that has been revealed in Christ Jesus! The storehouse of revelation was greatly increased for men when Jesus finished the transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness.

CALLED BELTESHAZZAR

“ . . . whose name was called Belteshazzar .” This was the name given to Daniel when he was a young man by the man who had charge of him (1:7). This was a Babylonian name meaning “Bel’s prince,” or “whom Bel favors.” “Bel” was a Babylonian god, or idol (Jer 50:2; 51:44).

This name is mentioned ten times in Scripture.

- When the name was given to Daniel (1:7).
- The prophet is identified as “Daniel whose name was Belteshazzar” (2:26; 4:8,19; 10:1).
- Nebuchadnezzar addressed Daniel as “Belteshazzar” (4:9,18).
- Belshazzar’s queen referred to Daniel as “Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar” (5:12).

Although a foreign name had been imposed upon Daniel, yet he referred to himself as one of the chosen people, not merely one of the prominent Babylonians. The man of God therefore says something was revealed to Daniel “whose name was called Belteshazzar.” The latter name is how men in Babylon referred to him. But when a messenger came from heaven, he did not address Belteshazzar, but said “O Daniel ” (9:22; 10:11,12; 12:4,9).

By saying “Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar,” the children of God are assured the prophet is one of them, and not a mere Babylonian. He was still one of the chosen people of God, even though honored by the kings of Babylon. The people of Babylon would also learn that one among them had heard from the God of heaven, whom they neither worshiped nor served.

Idols and Demons

Here was a man whose name indicated he was favored and protected by the god Bel. Yet he was actually beloved of the God of heaven, who was over Bel. He was also visited by holy angels who pierced the dark domain of the devil himself, who was the immediate god of Bel. According to the Scriptures, service directed toward idols is actually toward demons, who are behind them. Thus we read, “They . . .

offer their sacrifices to demons” (Lev 17:7), “they sacrificed to demons, not to God” (Deut 32:17), and “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God” (1 Cor 10:20).

You may be sure the devil and his demons did not want Daniel to hear from the God to whom they all answer, and by whom they have already been judged (John 16:11; Jude 1:6; Rev 12:9). Yet, there in Babylon, a citadel of Satanic power and delusion, there was a single man who heard from heaven, and was favored by God. Those holy experiences confirmed that Bel was no god at all, and that the dark powers behind him were in subjection to the “God of gods” (Dan 2:47; 11:36).

THE THING WAS TRUE

“ 1c . . . and the thing was true . . . ” The words “the thing” do not demean what was revealed, or suggest that it was not of great value. Rather, they emphasize that only a portion of the truth was revealed – particularly as compared with the “truth as it is in Jesus” (Eph 4:21). Here the words mean “a particular thing was revealed to me” – something specific.

The word “true” means certain, trustworthy, assured, established, and right. It was “certain” because it had been established by God. It was “trustworthy” because it had been revealed from heaven. It was “assured” because of Divine determination. It was “established,” being written upon the tablets of eternal purpose. It was “right” because governed by Divine righteousness, and in strict accord with the Divine nature.

The words “the thing was true” confirm that the message was real, accurate, and without any flaw. What was revealed to Daniel was cast in stone. It was not a message of probabilities or possibilities, but of something that was coming to pass, and could not possibly be averted. Such a word forbids doubt or skepticism on the part of men. Daniel sees this and does not question the message. Rather, receiving it to be absolutely true, he seeks for an understanding of it.

THE TIME WAS LONG

“ 1d . . . but the time appointed was long . . . ” Other versions read, “the appointed time was long,” NKJV “one of great conflict,” NASB “it concerned a great war,” NIV “even a great warfare,” ASV “the appointed time of trial was long,” DARBY “a true revelation of a great conflict,” NJB “times of war and great hardship,” NLT “it was a great task to understand the prophecy,” TNK and “the warfare is great.” YLT

The various readings are not at all harmonious. Some emphasize the time, while others focus on a particular conflict, or war. This is because the word from which “time appointed” is rendered (tsaba) comes from a root that can also mean a mass of persons organized for war. Thus some versions reject the phrase “time appointed,” choosing to translate the word “great conflict,” “great war,” “time of trial,” “and great hardship.”

Strong's word definitions points out that of the 485 times this word is used, 393 refer to a military host, 41 to a war, 29 to an army, 5 to service, 3 to an appointed time, 2 to warfare, 1 to soldiers, 1 to a company, and 5 to other miscellaneous words.

The message delivered to Daniel was going to take place in the future. That is, it was not appointed to take place immediately. The sense of the text is much the same as a word delivered to Habakkuk. "For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay" NIV (Hab 2:3).

Daniel's words are intended to encourage us to appropriate proper understanding, and not be satisfied with quick and seemingly easy learning. The fact that what was revealed was in the future did not make it irrelevant, because it was something God had both determined and revealed. Also, care must be taken not to settle for a cursory understanding of the matter, for God had extended Himself to get true understanding to Daniel through a heavenly messenger. Such Divine activity must not be met with indifference on the part of men.

IT WAS UNDERSTOOD

"1e . . . and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision."

Daniel is speaking of himself. He speaks in the past tense much like Paul did when recounting a lofty experience he had. "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven" (2 Cor 12:2).

There is a sense in which an individual through whom God speaks becomes another man. Such a thing was said of Saul when he was anointed king by Samuel. It is written, "And the spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man" (1 Sam 10:6). Such men are lifted above the course of nature, in order that they might fulfill commissions for which nature is not adapted.

By speaking in this manner, Daniel is ascribing his understanding to the Lord. His insights were not the product of his own reasoning, contemplation, or Babylonian credentialed wisdom. He had understanding because it was given to him – brought by an angel from heaven! It was a gift, a dispensation, a token of Divine favor. Now he will recount it point by point. No part will be omitted. He takes great care, however, to inform us of the source of his wisdom, thereby glorying in the Lord.

THREE FULL WEEKS OF MOURNING

“ 2 In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3 I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.”

In the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede, Daniel knew from Jeremiah’s writings that the seventy-year Babylonian captivity was about to end. At that time he set his face “unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.” During this time of fasting and prayer, the angel Gabriel came to Daniel by the command of God, to give him understanding. Now, four years later, Daniel again enters into a time of extended fasting and preparation. This time he is again in quest of wisdom and understanding.

We learn from this that revelation is granted in the context of the subduement of the flesh. Whether by fasting, the crucifixion of the flesh, resisting the devil, or other forms of subduing the carnal nature, one must move away from the prominence of the flesh to hear from the Lord.

IN THOSE DAYS

“ 2a In those days . . . ” These are the days during which “a thing was revealed” to Daniel. The man of God now makes known the circumstances under which the revelation was vouchsafed to him. For him, it was not a time of joy, but one of extended mourning.

THREE FULL WEEKS

“ 2b I Daniel was mourning three full weeks . . . ”

I Was Mourning

Other versions read, “gave myself to grief,” BBE “was in heaviness,” GENEVA and “a three week penance.” NJB Mourning is related to lamentation, sadness, being troubled, and bewailing. It is a way of buffeting the body, and bringing it into subjection. Mourning is the result of insight – particularly insight into self and the affairs of men. It is the result of Divine glory shining upon the human condition.

Daniel does not say why he was mourning “three full weeks.” We know from the text, that two years had passed since Cyrus had issued the decree to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-4). History tells us there had been an interruption of the Temple building. Cyrus was engaged in a war against the Sythians. His son Cambyses, corrupted by his military men, had halted the rebuilding of Jerusalem and

the Temple. If this is true, perhaps word had come back to Daniel, and he was lamenting over the report.

In my judgment, there are other possible reasons why Daniel may have been mourning.

- The implications of the word he had received from Gabriel earlier, concerning desolation to come upon the land (9:1-27).
- That all Jews had not returned to Jerusalem, even though released to do so by the mandate of Cyrus (Ezra 1:3).
- The report that the builders in Jerusalem were being troubled by their adversaries. The hands of the people had been weakened, and the enemies had hired counselors against them (Ezra 4:4). These may have been the very counselors who turned the heart of Cambyses, son of Cyrus. It is said that these men sought to “frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia” (Ezra 4:5).

Men of God cannot help but be troubled when the work of the Lord moves along slowly, or when those who have been granted liberty to leave Babylon choose to remain in it.

Mourning Before the Lord

The mourning of Daniel is not that of despair, but of deep sorrow before the Lord. He has been deeply affected by the condition of his people in a godly manner. To a certain degree, it may be said of him as it was said of the Lord Himself, “In all their affliction He was afflicted” (Isa 63:9).

Our blessed Lord said, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Mat 5:4). This mourning is produced by an awareness and impact of sin and man’s proclivity to it. The guilt and defilement produced by sin, as well as a hearty disdain for it, causes mourning to erupt in the soul. This can be personal sin, or the sin of those with whom one is associated. In Daniel’s case, it was both. The impact of sin had caused his people to be in captivity for seventy years. There was mourning because the Temple building had been delayed. There was also the matter of being unable to grasp the full intent of the revelations given to him. Sin was the mother of them all.

Later, we will find that the intent of Daniel’s prayer was to obtain understanding, and to chasten himself before the Lord. As it is written, “Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words” (Dan 10:12). Once again, the presence of sin and its affects are what created the need to understand, and the desire to chasten himself before the Lord.

Three Full Weeks

The extent of the impact of the above circumstances on Daniel is confirmed by the duration of his mourning – “three full weeks.” This is a most remarkable circumstance, revealing the sensitivity of the prophet. Few people are capable of sustaining godly mourning for any period of time. One would be hard pressed to find someone that eager to understand, and that desirous to be humbled before the God of heaven. But here is a man in whom faith had done a marvelous work. He had a heart and mind to know the things of God, and a compelling concern for the city, Temple, and people upon whom God had put His name. The weight of these things moved him to mourn in a state of spiritual alertness for “three full weeks.”

The Fast

“ . . . I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth.”

The extent of Daniel’s fasting reveals the depth of his intention, and the extent of his pursuit of understanding from heaven. Perhaps the reason why many obtain very little understanding is that they never really pursue it with zeal, taking the kingdom, as it was, by force (Matt 13:11). Solomon’s words may be applied in this matter. “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding” (Prov 4:7). In Christ Jesus, there is more wisdom to be had than was available to either Solomon or Daniel. But it is to be sought with all diligence and fervency – with the same spirit now seen in Daniel.

Pleasant food means “tasty food,” NASB “choice food,” NIV or “delicacies.” RSV Daniel refrained from eating anything “pleasing,” BBE or “tasty.” TNK The prophet purposefully withheld enjoyable food from himself, depriving himself of things that were lawful, yet were not expedient at the time. There are times when lawful pleasantries draw men away from higher and more noble things. Blessed is the person who knows this, and can distinguish such times.

Neither Did I Anoint Myself

Other versions read, “neither did I use any ointment at all,” NASB “I used no lotions at all,” NIV “I put no oil on my body,” BBE and “and used no fragrant oils,” NLT

The anointing to which Daniel refers is common in the East, and related to the promotion of personal comfort. This was a common way of preparing oneself to mingle in society. Jesus referred to the practice when speaking of fasting. “But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head , and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” (Mat 6:17-18). This was apparently associated with refreshment, and was a common courtesy to which Jesus referred when “a woman of the city” washed His feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them. When a Pharisee reasoned within himself that this was inappropriate, Jesus responded, “My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment” (Luke 7:46).

The thing to see here is that Daniel was so absorbed in his quest for understanding, that the normalities of life were no longer appealing. He withdrew himself from all bodily comforts because they were unimportant to him at the time. His heart and mind were given to great and more important things. I do not believe Daniel had to work at depriving his body of such pleasantries. Rather, in the presence of the Lord, and while engaged in such a fervent quest, such things were simply not appealing to him. It is surely in order for us to seek such a frame of mind.

Those who would be used by God must, to some measurable degree, have such experiences. They move men from the periphery of the mundane into the holy of holies. There must come a time when the human spirit is separated from the distracting affairs of this world, and life in the flesh. This is why Jesus often withdrew from the multitudes and everyday life for long vigils of prayer (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; John 18:2; Luke 21:37).

Such experiences culture the soul, preparing it to receive things from God that cannot otherwise be obtained. There is a certain spiritual soil in which the truth must grow. Many a poor soul remains in a state of ignorance and confusion simply because they live too close to the world.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF THE FIRST MONTH

“ 4 And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; 5 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.”

Beginning with this verse, Daniel records the answer to his prayer. For twenty-one days the man of God has prepared his soul by subjecting his body to the higher desires of his spirit. The words of our Lord ought to be remembered here. He taught there are some matters that can only be addressed by “prayer and fasting” (Matt 17:21). While the subject of His words pertained to the casting out of demons, the principle applies to a host of other things.

There are matters of such magnitude that they cannot be resolved by ordinary kingdom manners. There are also spiritual insights and understanding that cannot be appropriated by study and general godly demeanor alone. Some matters require aggressive and extended effort. These things ought to be apparent, and require no further comment.

Not only has Daniel been able to pray with more fervency and focus, he has also, in that process,

become more sensitive to the heavenly domain. His efforts were not in vain, for those who seek do find (Matt 7:8).

This is now the sixth time Daniel records a response to his prayers – prayers that spanned over a period of nearly seventy years.

- Daniel and his three friends prayed for “mercies of the God of heaven” to reveal the secrets of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great statue. Their prayers were answered (2:18-19).
- When Darius was deceived into passing a law against asking anything from God, Daniel offered his supplications anyway, and was delivered from the lion’s den into which he was cast for praying (6:10-11,22).
- During the first year of Belshazzar’s reign, Daniel had visions of great significance. When he asked concerning their meaning, he was given the interpretation of them (7:1,16,19).
- When beholding the vision of the ram and the he-goat, Daniel “sought for the meaning” of the vision, and received what he sought (8:15-16).
- During the first year of Darius’ reign, Daniel knew by Jeremiah’s writings that the Babylonian captivity was about to end. He set himself to seek the face of the Lord, and God responded by sending Gabriel to give him understanding (9:3,20-21).

Now, for the sixth time, a revelation of great magnitude is given to Daniel. When you ponder the insights that have been given to the sons of men, it will be apparent that very few have received things from God that transcended His normal communications with men. Some of the great prophets of God received only one or two such insights. Paul, you will recall, confessed to receiving “visions and revelations” from the Lord that were of a most extraordinary nature (2 Cor 12:1). They were of such significance, and so far removed from ordinary spiritual experience, that he was “given” a “thorn in the flesh” lest he be exalted “above measure” (2 Cor 12:7).

Now Daniel receives a sixth insight of things to come. All of the revelations given to this man of God were of such magnitude that to this very day they have challenged the minds of the most prodigious spiritual thinkers of this day of salvation.

This is a most excellent example of how God interacts with those who are “greatly beloved” by Him. I fear that the **“God-loves-everyone-the-same”** mentality that pervades the modern church world has robbed people of this perspective. Even though this view has been concocted to encourage people that they are loved by God, it has actually resulted in the spread of mediocrity. It has given people a reason to remain aloof from God, all the while thinking their standoffishness really has no effect upon

the Lord at all. Such thoughts are pure delusion.

If it is possible for an individual to be “greatly beloved” of God, it is not possible that He will treat everyone exactly the same, without discrimination vouchsafing to all the precious things of heaven. If such a thing was possible, there would be no distinctive men like Abraham, David, Daniel, Paul, and others. Their distinctiveness is found in the fact that they received more than ordinary men – even more than ordinary godly men! Although this is a rudimentary observation, it is hardly known in our day.

THE TWENTY-FOURTH DAY

“ 4a And in the four and twentieth day of the first month . . . ”

This was the twenty-fourth day of the first month of the Jewish year, and corresponded to our month of March. This “first month” was established when Israel was delivered from Egypt. That night, the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Ex 12:2). The fourteenth day of this month was established as “the Passover of the Lord” (Num 28:16). The Passover feast began on the fifteenth day of this month, and extended over seven days (Num 29:16-17).

Thus, Daniel had been mourning and praying during the Passover, “a feast of seven days” (Ezek 45:21). We know he had been mourning for three full weeks, the conclusion of which was the twenty-fourth day. The Passover took place on the fourteenth day, and the “feast of unleavened bread,” commenced on the fifteenth day of the first month (Lev 23:5-6), and extended for seven days, or through the twenty-second day. The time of our text, therefore, was two days after the conclusion of the Passover and its associated feast of unleavened bread.

There is no evidence that the actual Passover feast, or feast of unleavened bread, was being kept during the time of Daniel. In fact, the feast had not been properly kept for some time. During the reign of Josiah, he renewed the Passover feast, which had been greatly neglected. Of that feast it is written, “And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (2 Chron 35:18). Some time after Daniel, during the time of Ezra, “the children of the captivity kept the Passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month” (Ezra 6:19). However, there is no record of it ever being kept by the people when they were in Babylon.

Our text suggests, however, that Daniel had not forgotten the feast that celebrated Israel’s deliverance from “the iron furnace” of Egypt (Deut 4:20; Jer 11:43). It cannot be coincidence that his “three whole weeks” of mourning extended over the entirety of the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread.

After Three Whole Weeks

The events of our text also took place at the conclusion of Daniel's three-week period of mourning. He was now ready to receive from God. His heart and mind had been purged of the ordinary concerns relating to life in the flesh. His attention was now focused upon the city of God, the Temple of God, and the people of God.

An Observation

Once again, I want to observe that many people never hear from the Lord, or receive insights from Him, because they simply are not in the right frame of mind to do so. They remain too close to this world, too absorbed in its activities, and too enamored of its manners. Consequently their hearts are not tuned to the heavenly frequency. If God was to speak to them, like those obtuse Jews of Jesus' day, they would think it "thundered" (John 12:29).

In an effort to obscure this circumstance, Satan has fostered all manner of doctrines that lead people to believe they can suddenly and profitably be blessed by the Lord while they are in a carnal state of mind. Perhaps God will suddenly strike them down through the touch of another person, or throw them into an unconscious state in which they will suddenly become spiritual, and utter words in a heavenly language. Perhaps they will walk into a realm that is more dominated by the Holy Spirit, and thus will be forcibly wafted into a godly state of mind.

Whatever value may be assigned to such views, they are wholly without any Scriptural precedent. Great blessings generally follow great preparations. Before Jesus began His productive ministry, He spent forty days fasting in the wilderness (Matt 4:2). Before He chose His disciples, He spent all night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12-13). Before He presented Himself to those who would take His life according to Divine appointment, He prayed fervently in Gethsemane (Matt 26:38-44). Before the disciples chose one to fill the vacated bishopric of Judas, they spent time in prayer (Acts 1:13-14,24). The day of Pentecost was preceded by "devout men, out of every nation under heaven," being gathered together for the observance of the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2:5-12). Before Saul of Tarsus was given his commission, he spent three days during which he prayed, and did neither eat nor drink (Acts 9:9,11).

Enough cannot be said about this. Multitudes of people go to assemblies totally unprepared to receive a blessing. Others depend upon instant prayers during a crisis to bring down the blessing of God. Let it be clear that God does not bring great crops from unprepared soil. Thus the prophet admonished, "Break up your unplowed ground and do not sow among thorns" NIV (Jer 4:3). Such activity is necessary if men are to be directed by the God of heaven.

Daniel has broken up the unplowed ground, and tuned his heart to hear from heaven. Although he is personally unaware of what will actually take place, he is now ready to hear from the Lord.

THE GREAT RIVER

“ 4b as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel . . . ”

The “great river Hiddekel” is understood to be the Tigris River, and is so translated in most other versions (NKJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV, RSV, DOUAY, ESV, NJB, NLT). Versions representing the river as “Hiddekel” include KJV, ASV, DARBY, GENEVA, WEBSTER, and YLT.

This was the third of four rivers into which the river flowing through Eden was separated. As it is written, “And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison : that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon : the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria . And the fourth river is Euphrates ” (Gen 2:10-14).

The particulars of why Daniel was on the banks of this particular river are not provided. It appears that he was actually there, versus being transported there in a vision. Later, in the seventh verse, he affirms there were others with him when this event occurred: “And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.”

Eden’s River

One can only imagine the massiveness of the river that flowed through Eden, giving us some sort of indication as to Eden’s size. All of the rivers separating from it were exceedingly large.

Historians identify the Pison river with the **Ganges River** (Joseph, Eusibius, Ambrosius, Epiphanius, Jerome, and Augustine. McCLINTOCK STRONG Some also maintain it was associated with the Nile, although that view has proved difficult to substantiate. Whatever view one wishes to take, the river was exceedingly large. Today, the Ganges River is 1,560 miles long, rising in the Himalayas, and emptying into the Bay of Bengal, draining a quarter of the territory of India. BRITANNICA 2003

The Gihon River is said to encompass “*the whole land of Ethiopia.*” The reference to Ethiopia has led men to believe this was the **Nile River** . Although the exact identity of this river is difficult to establish, it also was one of significant size. Today, this river is 4,132 miles long, with its basin including Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, and part of Egypt. BRITANNICA 2003

The Hiddekel River, as already stated, is identified with the **Trigris River** , which ran Eastward to Assyria, as Genesis 2:14 states. Today, this river is 1,180 miles in length, standing on one side of the Mesopotamia, the “cradle of civilization,” with the Euphrates River on the other side.

The Euphrates River is mentioned fifteen times in Scripture (Gen 2:14;15:18; Deut 1:7; 11:24; Josh 1:4; 2 Sam 8:3; 2 Kgs 23:29; 24:7; 1 Chron 5:9; 18:3; Jer 46:2,6,10; Rev 9:14; 16:12). Today, the river is 1,740 miles in length.

Thus, the river flowing through Eden divided into four rivers that today have a combined length of 8,612 miles. That is over three times the distance from New York City to Los Angeles, CA. Think of it another way, the total watercourse flowing out of Eden was much greater than the following distances, which are all as the crow flies. All are from New York City: to London England (3,470 miles), to Moscow Russia (4,680 miles), to Cairo Egypt (5,621 miles), to Tokyo Japan (6,760 miles), to Bombay India (7,800 miles), and to Johannesburg South Africa (7,980 miles).

I LOOKED

“ 5a Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked . . . ” Another version reads, “I raised my eyes to look about me.” NJB

It is as though Daniel senses there is something to see, and therefore lifts up his eyes and looks about him. His spirit has been sensitized by the previous three weeks, making him more alert to his surroundings. He is not admiring the enormousness and majesty of the “great river,” for it is known to have been a swift moving river. Such meager sights, though they gain the attention of those living close to the earth are weak and beggarly after spending time in the presence of the Lord God of heaven and earth.

I realize that many are persuaded they can feel closer to God in a surrounding of natural beauty. However, there is no Scriptural basis for such a suggestion. Jesus spent time in the Mount of Olives at night, not in the day (Luke 21:37). He was not there to admire the trees and foliage, but to get away from the multitudes and the distractions of public life and its associated obligations.

Probably A Time of Devotion

It appears as though Daniel was in a state of devotion during this time. Perhaps this was right at the conclusion of the three full weeks he had spent mourning before the Lord. The language indicates that his head had been bowed toward the earth. Perhaps he was walking on the bank of the great river, similar to Isaac, who “went out to meditate in the field at eventide” (Gen 24:63). At any rate, it is highly unlikely that his presence there was a casual one, with no regard to the Lord and the thought he had entertained during his three week vigil. Those who are experienced in the Kingdom know that few people ever realize great spiritual experiences in the midst of the mundane. A Divine call or summons

may be realized while one is mending nets (Matt 4:21), plowing (1 Kgs 19:19), or sitting at the seat of customs (Matt 9:9). However, one will be hard pressed to find a single example in Scripture of anyone receiving a revelation of the magnitude of this text while engaged in such activities.

A CERTAIN MAN

“ 5b . . . and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6 His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.”

There are some valuable lessons to be learned as we consider this vision. We know from what follows that this was not a “man,” but a heavenly personality. His touch strengthened Daniel. He was sent from God. He had been engaged in a great battle with spiritual forces. This was not a man, but an angel who had come in the appearance of a man. The human form veiled the glory of the angel, making Daniel able to perceive him, and neutralizing the fear that would have otherwise dominated him.

His clothing and body will give us some indication of how angelic hosts adapt themselves to men. I do not know what liberty angels may have in how they appear to men, or if that appearance is part of their assignment. But whatever the answer may be, we have here a heavenly manner – a way heaven thinks about appearing before men. The glorified Christ, for example, when seen by John was “clothed with a garment down to the foot” (Rev 1:13). When God clothed Adam and Eve, it was with “coats of skin” (Gen 3:21). The high priestly vestments were designed to cover the flesh to such an extent that the priests were covered from their waists to their thighs (Ex 28:42). It is enough to say that such things ought to be duly noted by all who wear the name of the Lord.

A Certain Man

This was a specific personality who had been sent on a specific mission to a specific person, and at a specific time. There are no generalities here.

His Clothing

“ . . . clothed in linen.” This angel is not attired in immodest clothing, or scanty clothing, or some other demeaning garb. Whatever people may think of clothing, due attention ought to be given to the manner in which this angel made himself known to Daniel.

He was “clothed in linen.” Later, in the twelfth chapter, Daniel will encounter a messenger “clothed in linen” (12:12:6-7). Ezekiel was given a vision of an angel commissioned to “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek 9:4). It is said of this angel that he was “clothed in linen” (Ezek 9:2-3,11:10:2,6,7). Ezekiel was also told that those who

entered the sanctuary to minister to the Lord were to be “clothed with linen garments” (Ezek 44:16-17). John the beloved saw seven angels come out of the temple with seven plagues. They were all “clothed in pure and white linen” (Rev 15:6). The bride of Christ, the glorified church, is said to be granted to be “arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,” which depicted “the righteousness of saints” (Rev 19:8). The “armies of heaven” are also said to be “clothed in fine linen, clean and white” (Rev 19:14). When Jesus was buried, he was wrapped in “linen clothes” (John 19:40; 20:5-7).

All of this was foreshadowed in the attire of the high priest. He wore an “ephod” and “intricately woven band” (girdle) that was made of excellent material that were woven with “fine twined linen” (Ex 28:5-8). His “breastplate” was also made with “fine twined linen” (Ex 28:15). His overgarment was a “cost of fine linen,” and he wore a “mitre,” or turban, and “breeches” of the same material (Ex 28:39,42).

The significance of the angel being clothed in linen is seen in this. The message dealt with things pertaining to God, and thus it was appropriate that a garment be worn that was befitting of purity and sanctity – like the high priest.

His Loins

His “loins,” or waist, were girded with a belt made of the “gold of Uphaz.” Other versions read “pure gold,” NASB and “finest gold,” NIV and “best gold.” BBE

Girded loins are a depiction of readiness to do the bidding of the Lord – a sort of preparation to labor in an unhindered way. Those who were about to go on a mission were told “Gird up thy loins” (2 Kgs 4:29; Jer 1:17). The girding of the “loins of the mind” is also a summons to engage in deep thought concerning the words of the Lord (Job 38:3; 40:7; 1 Pet 1:13).

Jeremiah mentions “gold from Uphaz” (Jer 10:9), but nothing else is said in Scripture of either this kind of gold or this place. It was apparently a place yielding especially pure and precious gold.

When John saw the glorified Christ, He was also girded about with a “golden girdle,” belt, or sash (Rev 1:13). The belt of pure gold signifies that everything worn by the angel was held together and kept in place by value and true heavenly worth. Nothing was out of harmony with the truth or purpose of God. From the New Covenant point of view, this is like the believer having his “loins girt about with truth,” thereby holding all of the armor in place (Eph6:14). This depicts a certain order that penetrates all of the Kingdom.

His Body

There is considerable detail provided concerning the bodily frame of this messenger. Reference is made to “his body,” “his face,” “his eyes,” “his arms,” and “his feet.” While most impressive according to

appearance, this appearance was like a veil draped over the exceeding glory of this heavenly messenger. This veil enabled Daniel to see the messenger, and not be struck down with fright by the sight.

His Body

“His body also was like the beryl.” This was one of the stones in the breastplate of the high priest (Ex 28:20; 39:13). The wheels of Ezekiel’s vision of the wheel in a wheel were the color of beryl (Ezek 1:16;10:9-10). In Ezekiel’s delineation of the fall of Satan, he states that he, as the “anointed cherub,” was once in “Eden the garden of God,” and was covered with all manner of precious stones, including the beryl (Ezek 28:13). The beryl was also the eighth foundation of the wall of “the great city, the holy Jerusalem,” that John saw “descending out of heaven from God,” which was identified as “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Rev 21:10-20). Wherever it is mentioned in Scripture, it is always significant.

The identity of the beryl is not easy to determine. There are a variety of views on this subject. Strong’s Hebrew definitions say it is “perhaps a chrysolite, yellow jasper, or other yellow colored stone,” or “topaz.” Luther was of the opinion it was turquoise. Others have thought the color was amber. Kalisch says it is chrysolite, which is usually green of varying shades. Schleuser says it is a gem of the genus of the emerald, but less valuable than the emerald. Humble says the colors of the beryl are “grayish green, blue, yellow, and sometimes nearly white.” McCLINTOK AND STRONG

Nelson’s Bible Dictionary says the beryl “ranged in color from bluish green to yellow, white, pink, and deep green.”

Unger’s Bible Dictionary says the color of the beryl is “the deep-green variety being emerald.” It also says it is represented as “a deep red stone.”

The International Standard Encyclopedia of Bible Knowledge says it has a sea-green color.”

Calvin says the angel’s body was “sky-colored . . . of a golden hue.” Barnes says it is “green and bluish-green,” being “identical with the emerald.” Delitzsch and Keil say it is “the chrysolite of the Old and the Topaz of the New Testament.” Matthew Henry says it was “of a sky color.” John Gill says the beryl is “said to be of an azure and sky color,” that some think it was “a sea color, greenish,” while others say “the sardonyx is meant, which is of a flesh color.”

It should be apparent that we cannot establish the color of the beryl with any degree of certainty. It is therefore pointless to speculate about it. From the Scriptural use of this word it should be obvious that this stone is especially associated with the presence of the Lord. It was the first stone in the fourth row upon the high priests breastplate. It was associated with the glory of God shown to Ezekiel. It was related to Eden, the garden of God. And it was one of the foundation stones of the glorified church.

The body of this messenger had a color that reflected the glory from which he had come. It confirmed he had been sent from the presence of the Lord. That, in my judgment, is the point of emphasis.

His Face

“His face as the appearance of lightning.” The face of this messenger flashed brightly like shots of penetrating lightning. One version reads, “From his face came flashes of lightning.” NLT This was doubtless the emission of Divine glory, similar to the appearance of Moses’ face after he had been in the presence of the Lord (Ex 34:35).

Lightning is frequently associated with the God of heaven. In David’s depiction of Sinai at the giving of the Law, he said God sent out “lightning and discomfited them” (2 Sam 22:15). He is said to scatter His enemies by lightning (Psa 144:6). In Ezekiel’s “visions of God,” there were appearances of lightning (Ezek 1:13-14). Zechariah associated the flashing of lightning with the coming of the Lord (Zech 9:14). The lightning flashes from this messenger’s face confirmed that he had come from heaven – from the presence of the Lord. He was much like the angel of the Lord who “descended from heaven,” rolling back the stone from the tomb where Christ once lay, and sitting triumphantly upon it. It is said of that angel, “His countenance was like lightning” (Matt 28:3).

His Eyes

“His eyes as lamps of fire.” Other versions read his eyes were like “torches of fire,” NKJV “flaming torches,” NASB and “burning lights.” BBE

The eyes of the messenger were penetrating, and nothing was hidden from him. The matters of which he would speak were clear to him. He was not declaring something of which he knew little or nothing. It is apparent that although this person had the appearance of a man, it was not a man, but a member of the heavenly court.

This is the same kind of description given of the glorified Christ: “His eyes were as a flame of fire” (Rev 1:14; 2:18; 3:18; 19:12). Because of this, some are of the opinion that this was not an angel, but a vision of the Lord Himself. However, this cannot be true, for that would require that God or the Word be humbled to take a bodily form, come to earth, and deliver a message to one of the sons of men. When God came down upon Sinai, it was in resplendent glory, not in the form of a man. When He revealed

Himself to Moses, it was in the form of a proclamation, uttered in the afterglow of His glory, and not in the form of a man. Christ's appearance as a man to John was after He had been glorified as "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5). There can be no doubt that this was an angel sent from God, and not the Lord Himself.

His Arms and Feet

"His arms and his feet like in color to polished brass." Other versions read "burnished bronze," NKJV "the gleam of polished bronze," NASB "glittering brass," DOUAY "shining brass," Septuagint and "bright brass." YLT

When Ezekiel saw a revelation of God, there were four living creatures in the midst of the marvelous glory. He said of their feet, "And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass" (Ezek 1:7). In our text, the heavenly messenger has both arms and feet that were glittering brightly like highly polished brass. This personage has the form of a man, but there the likeness ends. This is in order to confirm to Daniel that he is receiving something from heaven. It is a high and lofty message than cannot be obtained from earth. Yet, in a singular display of Divine grace, the message is brought down to him, and presented so he can comprehend it.

However, with all of this, great care is taken that does not allow the heavenly messenger to be too close to the earth – too much like man. The message is, indeed, brought to earth, but only a godly man will be able to receive it.

His Voice

"The voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." Other versions read, "the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult," NASB "his words like the roar of a multitude," NRSV "his voice was like the sound of an army," BBE and "his voice was like the roaring of a vast multitude of people." NLT

When the messenger spoke, it sounded like the shouts of a multitude of people. The sound as well as the message was vast, impressive, and inspirational. Those who like quiet devotional talks would certainly have been ill-at-ease on this occasion. The impression I receive from this text is that the heavenly message had an overpowering effect, drowning out, as it was, the sounds of earth. When this angel began to speak, the roar of the rushing Tigris River could no longer be heard. Distractions lost their power, and Daniel's attention was riveted on the message being brought to him. The affairs of state certainly did not enter into Daniel's mind at this time.

Not Daniel's First Vision

Keep in mind, this is not the first vision Daniel has received, nor is it his first encounter with a

heavenly being. He had previously overheard two heavenly personalities talking (8:13-14). He had been personally tutored by the angel Gabriel, who was also in appearance as a man (8:15-27; 9:21-27). But this angel is even more dazzling in appearance. Whether or not it was because he was a superior angel, I do not know.

It is enough to observe that the revelations given to Daniel appear to increase in both volume and the nature of the things revealed. This also is a manner of the kingdom – to continue to grow and expand. Thus, the things revealed to Daniel in the latter years of his life were of greater magnitude than those revealed at the beginning of his prophetic tenure. It is in order for us to expect such things.

Something To Be Learned

If ever the human spirit can be tuned to the heavenly frequency, and the heart and mind become occupied with eternal verities, the things of this world will begin to lose their attractiveness and power. Heaven always speaks louder than the earth. However, as we will see from this text, only those who have given their attention to holy things will be able to discern what is being said.

When the earth is like unwanted static to our souls, and its sounds are an unwanted interruption to our spirits, then, and only then, will the heavenly voice drown them out. As long as the things of this world are viewed as superior, heaven will be silent.

ONLY DANIEL SAW THE VISION

“ 7 And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.”

There are messages and insights that are NOT for everyone – messages that are brought to specific people at specific times. God’s communication at Sinai was only for Israel. His face to face communication was only for Moses. Following His resurrection, Christ appeared only to His disciples, showing them things that, at the time, were for no one else. Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, but His word was for Saul alone, not those who were with him. When Paul was wafted into the third heaven, he heard words intended for him alone, and for which there was no human capability to communicate the message to others.

Now Daniel is brought a message that those who are with him are not intended to receive.

Whether men wish to accept it or not, there are discretionary revelations from God – words that come to specific people at specific times. Some of them may be told later, like the word to the shepherds on the night our Lord was born. But the angels appeared only to the shepherds, not all of those to whom they reported. So it is in our text.

ONLY DANIEL SAW

“ 7a And I Daniel alone saw the vision . . . ” Another version reads, “I, Daniel, was the only one who saw the vision.” NIV

In the flesh, one might suppose it impossible to hide a dazzling heavenly messenger from whose face lightning bolts flashed, who was girded with gold, whose eyes were like brightly burning torches, and whose arms and legs glistened like highly polished brass.

This is why the appearance is called a “vision.” It was not something contained in the course of nature, but was transcendent to nature. As I understand it, a vision is perceived by the mind, not the eye. Thus the Scriptures speak of visions as being in the “head” (Dan 2:28; 4:5,10,13;7:1,15). Visions are not detected with the physical senses, for they are a spiritual experience.

This opens the meaning of the expression, “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov 29:18). That is, where people are not given to see spiritual realities, or where the things of God are not revealed to them, they will perish. Thus other versions read, “Where there is no revelation,” NIV “When there is no prophecy,” DARBY “When prophecy shall fail,” DOUAY and “When people do not accept Divine guidance.” NLT

Daniel is receiving revelation, a prophecy, a word from God, and Divine guidance – and he is the only one who will be granted to perceive and understand it.

THE MEN WITH HIM

“ 7b . . . for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.”

It is apparent from this that some awareness of the supernatural events registered upon those who were with Daniel. We are not told who they were. They could have been fellow Jews. They could also have been official attendants to Daniel, serving some of his needs. He was still remained in a place of political prominence.

A Great Quaking

Note the Divine discrimination. A vision was sent to Daniel, and a “great quaking” to those who were with him. Other versions read, “an exceeding great terror fell on them,” DOUAY “a great fear fell upon them,” GENEVA “great amazement fell upon them,” Septuagint “a great trembling overtook them,” NJB and “they were suddenly terrified.” NLT

These men sense something, we do not know exactly what it was – but it was related to this majestic personality that had been sent to Daniel. Alarm fell suddenly upon them so that they could not remain. The vision was intended for Daniel alone, and thus the presence of the angel is more than they can bear.

God has revealed that He can “appoint” a terror over people, causing it to come upon them (Lev 26:16). He can make people “flee when none pursueth” (Lev 26:17). He can even cause “the sound of a shaken leaf” to chase men, so that they flee “as fleeing from a sword” (Lev 26:36). That is something to put into your spiritual arsenal when enemies or circumstances begin to cause you undue concern. If the presence of an angel can have such an affect upon men, what of the presence of the Lord Himself?

They Fled to Hide

Fear so gripped these men that “fled to hide themselves.” This confirms the reality of what happened to Daniel. The men who were with him were only exposed to the residue of angelic glory, and yet it was still more than they could bear. Believe me, God can rid the ranks suddenly and effectively of those who do not understand. It is good to learn to bank on this.

An Observation

If such a fear fell on the men who were with Daniel when but a single angel came down from heaven to him (not to them), what will occur when Jesus comes in all of His glory, and the glory of the Father, and the glory of all His holy angels? Those who imagine there will be an alliance of the ungodly who will fight against the glorified Christ betray a very distorted understanding, to say the very least, and to be undeservedly charitable. Jesus will “consume” the loftiest of all His adversaries “with the spirit of His mouth,” and “destroy” him “with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess 2:8). Even the heavens and earth will flee from before His face (Rev 20:11). When His enemies see Him coming in glory they will call out to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, for from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev 6:16).

When Jesus comes “to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe,” His enemies – all of them – will shrink back in terror, for He is also coming at that time to destroy them. As it is written, “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in his saints . . .” (2 Th 1:10).

As confirmed in this vision, glory and flesh cannot mingle. Even the glory of holy angels must be significantly veiled before messages and benefits can be passed from them to men. And even then, those to whom they have not been sent run and hide in fear. Let us have done with views of glory that tend to take this truth from us! Such teachings are dangerous beyond all description. They are shallow soil in which all manner of erroneous and damaging thought will grow.

LEFT ALONE

“ 8 Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.”

Again, I want to take care to emphasize the impact this heavenly messenger had upon Daniel and those with him. This was a most sobering occasion, which is the manner of the kingdom. The closer one gets to the Lord and heavenly influences, the more sober and serious they become. This needs to be known in a day when casualness and haphazardness has barged into the church with disruption to sensitive hearts. Those who have genuine encounters with the powers of heaven do not easily forget them, and are most assuredly sober during such occasions.

When the glory of the Lord appeared on Sinai, it is written “And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off” (Exo 20:18). This is not to mention the impact the voice of God had upon Adam and Eve after they had sinned. They also hid (Gen 3:8).

Let me give you an even more vivid example of the effect of the spirit world upon men in the flesh. Eliphaz the Timanite told Job of an experience he had. “Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake . Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up ” (Job 4:12-15). If that is what “a little thereof” can do to the flesh, what can be said of an abundance?

I WAS LEFT ALONE

“ 8a Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision . . . ” Just as the disciples forsook Jesus when His hour came (Mk 14:50), so all of those with Daniel forsook him when this hour came. Instead of fleeing with those with him, Daniel remains to face the heavenly messenger all alone. In this respect, he was like the patriarch Jacob, who alone wrestled with a heavenly messenger (Gen 32:24-29).

The point here is that Daniel was left alone looking at this vision . No kindred souls were with him. Other versions read, “So I was left alone, gazing at this great vision,” NIV and “So I was left alone to see this great vision.” NRSV

Application

For every child of God, there is a Peniel – as that of Jacob who wrestled there through the night (Gen 32:30). It is a time when the magnitude of Divine glory is more immediately confronted, leaving an unforgettable impact upon the human spirit.

NO STRENGTH

“ 8b . . . and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.”

How will a confrontation with the spiritual world affect Daniel? As with us, that world was always there. But now Daniel knowingly encounters it.

No strength

Other versions read, “yet no strength was left in me,” NASB “I had no strength left,” NIV “My strength left me,” NRSV “all my strength went from me,” BBE “I was powerless,” NJB and “I was drained of strength.” TNK

The mere confrontation of a person from “the world to come” utterly depleted all human, or fleshly strength. No war was fought, no display of angelic strength and power was given. The vision of the angel caused the strength of a holy man, greatly beloved in heaven, to wither and disappear. John experienced the same thing when the glorified Christ appeared to him on Patmos. “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead” (Rev 1:17).

All of this confirms that presently there are conflicting things between heaven and earth. The closer God gets to the flesh, the more it trembles. The presence of heavenly glory is disruptive to the flesh. For those in Christ Jesus, this will only be terminated when we are “like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1-2).

Comeliness Turned to Corruption

Other versions read , “my vigor was turned to frailty,” NKJV “my natural color turned to a

deathly palor,” NASB “my face turned deathly pale,” NIV “my complexion grew deathly pale,” NRSV “radiant appearance was fearfully changed,” RSV “the color went from my face.” BBE and “my glory was turned into corruption.” Septuagint

Daniel’s face assumed the pale and yellowish palor of death. The sight before him was so awesome that his physical power nearly shut down completely. The confrontation of a glorious person from the heavenly realms was too much for the flesh – and that was a glory that was much veiled! Earlier, Daniel had a similar experience when his countenance was changed within him at the conclusion of the vision of the four great beasts from the sea (7:28).

Habakkuk responded similarly to a message that was delivered to him. He records, “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself” (Hab 3:16).

Moses had a similar experience on Mount Sinai. There, amidst the thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud upon the mount, and a tempest blowing upon them, Moses cried out, “I exceedingly fear and quake!” (Heb 12:21).

What we have here is nature convulsing in the presence of glory, being weakened in the presence of glory. What happened on Mount Sinai is happening in Daniel’s person. What took place in nature when Jesus died, is taking place in the body of the beloved of God. It is a miniature picture of what will take place when the Lord Jesus is revealed in all of His glory. There will be a violent disruption of the entire natural order. At that time “The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again” (Isa 24:20).

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not from mere old age – even though the heavens and the earth shall “wax old like a garment” (Psa 102:25-26). They will be made instantly “old,” and pass away in the blaze of the glory of God, Christ, and the holy angels.

The Folly Of A Fleshly Religion

These days it is important to point out the folly of a religion that is anchored to the flesh, or the body. When too much attention is given to the body, or fleshly experiences, it is quite evident that not much glory has been seen. The more of God a person sees, the more deficient the flesh becomes.

I am persuaded some people would place more value on the bodily experience of Daniel than the vision that he was given to see. However, the draining of Daniel’s strength and the change of his countenance was not the blessing. The blessing was the message that had been sent to him from heaven.

In Christ Jesus, the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit withers the flesh, robbing it of its power. This is involved in the following words. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:13-14). The Lord came to deliver us from the flesh, and the Spirit leads us in that deliverance.

With Daniel, the subduing of the flesh came by means of a heavenly messenger wrapped in subdued glory. His flesh could not be prominent then, but fell beneath that weight of glory. For those in Christ Jesus, it comes through the enabling ministry of the Holy Spirit, who leads us in crucifying the flesh.

HE HEARD THE WORDS ANYWAY

“ 9 Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.”

Daniel’s spirit was more alert than his body. While his outward man reeled to and fro at the sight of the angel, his inward man could still hear what was being said to him. This confirms to us that our outward nature is vastly inferior to our inward one. There is, in this case, a vast difference between the fear and dread that moved Israel to cry out, “let not God speak with us, lest we die” (Ex 20:19), and the response of Moses, which was “show me Thy glory” (Ex 33:18).

THE VOICE OF HIS WORDS

“ 9a Yet heard I the voice of his words . . . ” Other versions read, “the sound of his words,” NKJV “I heard him speaking,” NIV

The focus was not the appearance of the heavenly being – although that was very impressive. It was the message that he brought that was the center of attention. Although his appearance was dazzling and arresting, it was nevertheless quite subdued. The angel was not the point, but the message – not his glory, but the glory of his word. Therefore, Daniel says he heard the voice of his words, even though his appearance had registered such a formidable impact upon his flesh.

I WAS IN A DEEP SLEEP

“ 9a . . . and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.” Other versions read, “I fell into a trance, face to the ground,” NRSV “I fell into a deep stupor on my face,” DARBY “I lay in consternation upon my face,” DOUAY “I was pricked in my heart, and I fell with my face toward the earth,” Septuagint “I fell fainting, face toward the ground,” NJB and “overcome by a deep sleep, I lay prostrate on the ground.” TNK

I cannot help but notice the clash of the spiritual with the order of flesh. When exhilarating and awe-inspiring fleshly experiences occur, they generally do not put us to sleep. In fact, fearful sights have a way of driving sleep from us. But that it not what happened here. The flesh was anything but alert!

Of course, the site was not natural, or in the flesh. It was rather in the spirit and mind. It was a vision, and visions from God have a calculated affect upon the flesh, subduing its power, and enabling the human spirit to gain proper focus. The flesh simply cannot traffic in the domain of spiritual realities. It not only has no interest inn such things, it cannot survive in such holy climes.

The vision vouchsafed to Daniel, and the words that were spoken in it, overpowered the flesh, causing Daniel’s body to fall to the earth in a stupor, or trance. Mind you, this was not a carnal man, or one who was a stranger to the things of God. This was a man confessed to be “greatly beloved” in the heavenly realms. The meaning here is that his spirit remained alert, even though his body was overcome. In the Word of God, this is not an unusual experience.

The words “deep sleep” mean an unconscious state, a heavy sleep, or fast asleep. It is a state wherein the flesh becomes non-functional. Yet, this is not a state where Divine or heavenly communication cannot be realized. Some examples will suffice to establish this point.

When God ratified His covenant with Abram, He did so while a “deep sleep” had fallen upon the patriarch. As it is written, “And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And He said unto Abram , Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years . . . ” (Gen 15:12-13). With God, all things are truly possible.

When conversing with Job Eliphaz said he had visions in the night when “deep sleep falls upon men” (Job 4:13). Job acknowledged the same experience (Job 33:15). Earlier, in another vision, an angel communicated with Daniel while he was “in a deep sleep on his face toward the ground” (8:18). Later, the angel will enable Daniel to marshal his bodily energies. However, until then, the communication is going on.

It is not appropriate to make more of this occasion than the Spirit intends. The point is that flesh

is a severe limitation to us, and therefore must often be put to the side in order that God can speak to us. It should be apparent to us that when our flesh is dominant, it causes our inner ears to be deaf, and the eyes of our understanding to become clouded.

CONCLUSION

The stage has now been set for a momentous revelation to be given to Daniel. He has spent three full weeks mourning before the Lord, and seeking for an understanding of things revealed to him. He is withdrawn from the normalities of life, on the banks of the Tigris river. At this point those who were with him have been repelled by their awareness of supernatural things, even though they did not see the vision Daniel saw, nor hear the words that he heard.

If one wonders why Daniel has had such a disconcerting experience, remember that he has been mourning for three full weeks, keenly aware of his own shortcomings, and the reprehensible conduct of his people. Four years before this, aware that the Babylonian captivity was about to end, he had raised an extended prayer to the Lord in which he confessed his own sin and that of his people. He had offered supplications for the holy city and the Temple, where God had placed His name.

In the midst of this, the mighty angel Gabriel had visited him, divulging the coming Messiah, and how He would be cut off from the land of the living, thus finishing transgression, making an end of sin, making reconciliation for iniquity, bringing in everlasting righteousness, fulfilling the vision and prophecies of the ages, and anointing the most holy place for the entrance of the redeemed of the Lord.

All of this had honed the spirit of this man of God to a fine edge, sensitizing him to the purpose of God, and drawing him into holy involvement with that purpose. He is more aware of heaven than of earth, and more alert to the Lord than to either Darius or Cyrus.

As I said at the beginning of this lesson, this chapter prepares the way for the last two chapters of Daniel. Some might wonder how this could be, since the eleventh chapter begins with the words, "Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him" (Dan 11:1). Since that first year of Darius was considerably before the third year of Cyrus, how, then, can the tenth chapter possibly be a prelude to chapters eleven and twelve? The answer is quite simple. The first verse of chapter eleven are not the words of Daniel, but of the angel who begins speaking to Daniel in the tenth chapter.

We therefore have every right to expect some remarkable insights to be ministered in this chapter. We also have a beloved and sensitive prophet to receive and record them. Be assured of this:

nothing mediocre can come from this!

The Prophecy of Daniel

AN ANGEL BATTLES HIS WAY TO EARTH WITH A UNIQUE INTERPRETATION

Lesson # 31

INTRODUCTION

Daniel has been brought into contact with the powers of heaven. A holy angel is confronting him – not in vision only, but with words. The experience has been devastating to the flesh, for flesh is not able to endure such lofty communications. Sin has had a calculated affect upon the Adamic, or human, nature. Although it was not clearly known in Daniel’s day, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor 15:50). This not only applies to “the world to come,” but present kingdom experiences as well. “Flesh and blood” cannot be “taught by God” (John 6:45), see “Him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27), be “led by the Spirit” (Rom 8:14), or “come to” Jesus to be taught by Him (Matt 11:28).

The Spirit is very specific about this matter. “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:8). Rather than “the flesh” being the vehicle through which blessing and instruction are given, it is to be the object of crucifixion. In fact, “they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24). Our present bodies are “vile” (Phil 3:21), and produce a state of wretchedness in those who are living by faith (Rom 7:24).

THE FRAILTY OF THE BODY

Our physical constitution is an “earthen vessel,” and is not presently capable of participating in the benefits of the “treasure” that is housed within (2 Cor 4:7). It is the weakest part of our constitution, as confirmed by our text.

- First, as Daniel approached the Lord, he brought his flesh under subjection. As soon as Daniel, a holy and beloved man of God, came into contact with a heavenly messenger, his flesh was overcome. For three full weeks he neither ate nor drank anything pleasant, refusing to give his body refreshing ointments (10:3).
- When visited from heaven, no strength remained in him, his comeliness was turned to corruption, and he retained no strength. He fell upon his face to the ground, and a deep sleep came upon his body (10:9).

It is one thing to read such an account, it is quite another to correlate it with ones theology. It should not surprise you that a considerable amount of professed religious value is founded upon bodily experience. It may relate to certain sensations attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit, being thrown down violently, unintelligible expressions, etc. Such views have compelled people to actually place more value upon what happened in their body than what is revealed to their spirits.

It is not my purpose to demean such experiences, anymore than it would be appropriate to speak reproachfully of Daniel’s experience. However, it is imperative that we note the blessing was not found in Daniel’s body lying face down upon the ground. The draining of his fleshly strength is not represented as the intention or end of the blessing. In fact, Daniel had to recover from that circumstance before he could receive what God has sent to him.

In our text, the frailty of the body will once again be emphasized. Daniel could not simply wait for the effects of the angelic appearance upon his body to fade away or wear off. Recovery required supernatural intervention. Only then did the revelation continue. The revelation was the point, not its impact upon Daniel’s body.

A POINT TO BE MADE

While it is grievous to make this point, both our spiritual and social culture demands that we do so. The body is not the locus, or center, of the life of faith. While it does belong to the Lord, and is for

Him (1 Cor 6:13,15), it is not the hub of life in Christ Jesus. This is the part of our persons that has been cursed, and cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That is so apparent that one would think nothing more was required to be said.

However, in the affluent Western world, the people of God are being subjected to all manner of teachings that accentuate life in the flesh, or “in the body.” Such things as healing, prosperity, and earthly success are not wrong of themselves. However, neither are they guaranteed in Christ Jesus.

- One of the greatest prophets of all time died of a disease – one in which he was not being chastened (2 Kings 13:14).
- A holy man who was personally escorted to Abraham’s bosom by holy angels was a “beggar full of sores” during his life upon the earth (Luke 16:20).
- The Apostle who “labored more abundantly” than the other Apostles experienced infirmity (Gal 4:13), need (Phil 4:12), and personally found that when he was weak, then He was strong (2 Cor 12:10).
- The man known as the only person Paul had, who naturally cared for the condition of God’s people, lived with “often infirmities” (1 Tim 5:23).
- In his travels, Paul once “left Trophimus sick in Miletus” (2 Tim 4:20).
- There was a whole body of saints in Jerusalem who were poor, and needed regular assistance from the churches (Rom 15:26).
- The early church had widows who required “daily ministration” (Acts 6:1).
- Some of the choicest saints were in bonds and suffered adversity (Heb 13:3).
- Some of the most favored saints of all time are described as experiencing “trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise” (Heb 11:36-39).
- Pure and undefiled religion before God “is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction , and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).
- One of the telling descriptions of God’s people is found in Christ’s revelation of how He will judge the

response of people to them. In that description He identifies them with Himself. “ For I was an hungered , and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty , and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger , and ye took Me not in: naked , and ye clothed Me not: sick , and in prison , and ye visited Me not” (Mat 25:42-43).

- Epaphroditus nearly died from a sickness, while he was in prison with the Apostle Paul (Phil 2:25-27).

All of these matters pertained to the body, and were not by any means the indication of some form of spiritual inferiority. It is inexcusable for men to guarantee wellness to the household of faith, or declare that healing is an integral part of the atonement, or that Jesus died to guarantee our prosperity. Illness is nowhere said to be a sin, or to alienate from God. Christ died for sin! No man of God ever taught such a thing: not Moses, the Prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus Himself, nor the Apostles. Men of God have desired that their brethren “prosper and be in health” as their soul prospered (3 John 1:2). But that is a far cry from a guarantee that such conditions belong to every child of God.

This is not some theological bypath. If we do not keep these realities in mind, texts like the one before us will not be viewed correctly or with everlasting profit. Daniel still heard the angel even though his body had succumbed in the wake of the vision. The blessing he received did not automatically transfer to his body, but rather became the undoing of the body. Further, the angel will enable Daniel to recover himself. However, it will not be easy, but attended with difficulty.

HE TOUCHED ME

“ 10:10 And, behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.”

This is the third time Daniel has been touched by one from heaven. The first two times are record in the eighth and ninth chapters. “Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me , and set me upright . . . Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation” (Dan 8:8; 9:21). He will experience a fourth touch later: “Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me” (Dan 10:18).

If the sight of an angel from heaven causes men to faint, what will result from the touch of such a personality.

AN HAND

“And, behold, an hand touched me . . .” Behold the gentility of heaven! An angel from heaven could easily crush the strongest of the sons of men. Yet, you sense a certain gentleness in heaven’s dealings with the prophet Daniel. The angel did not take him by a lock of his hair, as the heavenly messenger did to Ezekiel (Ezek 8:3).

Now, the angel whose appearance had stunned Daniel, graciously and gently touches him, bringing both strength and assurance.

WHICH SET ME UP

“ . . . which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands.” Other versions read, “which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands,” NKJV “and set me trembling on my hands and knees,” NASB “setting my knees and my hands trembling,” NJB “still trembling, to my hands and knees,” NLT and “and shook me onto my hands and knees.” TNK

The idea is that Daniel was already trembling, and that the heavenly touch raised him to his hands and knees while he remained trembling. Remember, this was a holy prophet, greatly beloved of God. One can only imagine what the impact of this occasion would have had on someone who was unholy, disinterested, or caught up in the ways of the world.

Before the message is fully disclosed to Daniel, he will be brought to the peak of sensitivity – both in spirit and in body. All of his resources must be marshaled and focused upon this single occasion. There can be no distractions. The message is too critical.

A Small Picture

This is but a small picture of the ultimate and appointed confrontation of all men with the Father of glory, the glorified Christ, and all of His holy angels. That encounter will be accompanied by the greatest solemnity. Never before will humanity have been in such a state of alertness and awareness. “Every eye” will see the glorified Savior, and those who are alienated from Him will “wail because of Him” (Rev 1:7). Among the unsaved there shall be such lamenting as was never known while they were upon the earth. The cry recorded in Jeremiah will rise before the assembled universe: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jer 8:20).

Regarding that day, it is imperative that men be “touched” prior to the return of our Lord. That slone will prepare them. Strength and awareness must be developed before the appearance of Christ, else one will not be able to stand in that day. The words of Malachi certainly apply in this matter: “But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth? for He is like a

refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap: and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness" (Mal 3:2-3).

UNDERSTAND AND STAND UP

“ 11 And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.”

It is one thing to be granted a vision of a heavenly personality. It is quite another to have him speak with favor and consideration. Once again, we will see the benefit of being close to the Lord and being especially loved by Him. Since the psychologists and educators have gained prominence in the church, we do not hear much being said about such things. They are counterproductive to career development and institution building. Notwithstanding, the Holy spirit has said much about this aspect of the Divine nature, and we do well to give heed to it.

A MAN GREATLY BELOVED

“ 11a And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved . . . ” This is the second time Daniel has been addressed in this manner.

- Revelation given because he was greatly beloved. The first is recorded in the previous chapter: “I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved” (9:23).
- A prelude to understanding. Now, the belovedness of Daniel will be the occasion for understanding.
- Peace and strength are ministered. The third time is later in this same chapter: “O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong” (10:19).

As I have said before, Daniel is the only man of whom it is said, he was “greatly beloved.” It is said of Solomon that he was “beloved of his God” (Neh 13:26), and that “the Lord loved him” (2 Sam 12:24). In his supplications, David twice refers to himself as “Thy beloved” (Psa 60:5; 108:6). Solomon does the same in Psalm 127:2. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, John four times refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7,20). It is said of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, “Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus” (John 11:5). On one occasion, when asked by a wealthy young man what he must do to inherit eternal life, it is written, “Jesus beholding him loved him” (Mk 10:21). His inquiry had drawn on the heartstrings of the Savior.

The church in Rome was addressed as “beloved of God” (Rom 1:7). The Thessalonian brethren were also saluted in this manner (2 Thess 2:13).

The premier “beloved” One is the Lord Jesus Himself, whom God called “My beloved Son” (Matt 3:17; 17:5).

You will not, however, find many verbalizations of such Divine love. It is an expression reserved for those who are especially tender toward the Lord.

Because I have dealt previously with this matter, there is no need to develop it any further here. It is enough to observe that those who are in Christ Jesus are to aspire to be especially loved by the Lord. That is the reason for the following admonitions.

- “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children” (Eph 5:1).
- “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing ” (Col 1:10).
- “But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God ” (Phil 4:18).
- “Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight , through Jesus Christ” (Heb 13:21).

As confirmed in Daniel, special and unusual benefits are ministered to those who have extended themselves to walk pleasing before the Lord . If this observation is true, mediocrity is an offensive blight that robs the soul and stunts the spiritual growth of those in its grip. Casualness and disinterest pushed those dominated by them away from God, away from blessing, and away from Divine comfort and strength.

An Observation

If these words appear to be too strong, be assured that, if anything, they are too weak. The staggering investment that God has made in our salvation will not allow for any other conclusions. For the willing sacrifice of Christ, and His present beneficent rule and intercession in our behalf, to be met with erratic and meager responses is intolerable. Further, when such responses are produced by a religious system, we have before us an example of the reality and effects of “strong delusion.”

UNDERSTAND THE WORDS

“ 11b . . . understand the words that I speak unto thee . . . ” Other versions read, “ carefully consider the words I am about to speak to you,” NIV “ pay attention to the words that I am going to speak to you,” NRSV “ give heed to the words that I speak to you,” RSV “take in the sense of the words I say to you,” BBE “ listen carefully to what I say to you,” NLT “ mark what I say to you,” TNK and “ attend to the words that I am speaking unto thee.” YLT

The objective of heavenly communication is not impression or sensation, but understanding. You can see from the various translations that different aspects of understanding are emphasized. Understanding involves the work of God and the response of men – both are required. If what is made known is to be comprehended, it must be carefully considered . It is imperative that the heart pay attention to what is being said. The will must move the individual to give heed, listen carefully , and attend to what is being declared. The sense , or implication, of the message is to be taken in, and the intellect must mark , or differentiate, the message, setting it apart from all of the wisdom and sounds of the world. If this is not done, understanding will not come.

God has always required understanding. Under the Law He said, “Understand therefore” (Deut 9:3,6). Jesus said, “Hear and understand” (Mark 15:10). Those who are converted are described as coming to “understand” (Rom 15:21). Paul wrote that men might “understand” (Eph 3:4; Phil 1:12). Paul prayed that those to whom he wrote would be given understanding from God (Eph 1:18-19; 2 Tim 2:7). A lack of understanding is always depicted as a most serious condition (Prov 28:5; Isa 6:9; 2 Pet 2:12; Jer 5:21; Mark 7:18; Rom 1:31).

It should not take us unawares, therefore, that the heavenly messenger urges Daniel to understand, comprehend, or discern, the word that is being brought to him. In order to do that, two things must happen. First, understanding must flow from heaven to Daniel. Second, he must engage all of his powers to receive that understanding. He will have to concentrate, listen attentively, and ponder what he is told, allowing the words to saturate his heart and mind. God does not administer understanding to inattentive and distracted souls. Therefore, the angel calls Daniel into a state of sobriety and alertness.

A Word About the Times

It should be obvious that we are living in a religious culture that fails to encourage this posture of heart and mind. This is day when entertainment and sensual impressions have been unduly exalted. The accent has been placed upon the soulish nature of man, to the neglect of his spiritual constitution. The vast resources of the mind are thrust into the background in preference for instant impressions and exhilarating feelings. This trend is reflected in the music, entertainment, messages, and emphases of our times.

We should not be surprised that such trends have produced an arid spiritual desert. A lack of “spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9) is evident in the average church. Convenient religious creeds and slogans have been developed that relieve men of thoughtful deliberation, and focused consideration.

Gifted and productive thinkers are rare, and in some circles they appear to be non-existent.

Let it be clear, the God of heaven does not work graciously in such environments. If, under the Law, and in the lesser light of the Old Covenant, holy men were required to marshal all of their resources in an effort to understand, what of this “day of salvation?” What of a circumstance where there is a superior Man, a transcendent message, a better covenant, and a powerful Gospel? What kind of attentiveness should characterize a time like this? What type of understanding ought to be found among those who wear the name of Jesus Christ? How ought the preachers who claim identity with Him speak? And, how should the hearers hear?

The words of Paul, written to Timothy are still appropriate. The sense of them ought to attend every message, and dominate every heart that is subjected to this glorious Gospel. “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Tim 2:7). If God speaks – and He has spoken to us through His Son (Heb 1:1-2) – there is a solemn obligation placed upon all men to hear Him “who speaks from heaven” NKJV (Heb 12:25). The speaking Jesus still cries out, “Hear, and understand” (Matt 15:10). Again it is written, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live” (Isa 55:3).

The quest for spiritual understanding within the professed church of our time is too meager. It is reproachful to Christ, and dishonoring of God to not pursue understanding when the treasures of heaven have been opened to men. God does not unveil the great mysteries kept secret from the foundation of the world for them to be despised and neglected. If Solomon urged his son to “get understanding” available in his time (Prov 4:5,7), what must be said of this day when God’s doctrine is dropping as rain, distilling as the dew, and falling as showers upon the grass (Deut 32:2)?

STAND UPRIGHT

“11c . . . and stand upright . . .” Other versions read, “stand up,” NIV “stand up on your feet.” RSV and “get up on your feet.” BBE

Before the messenger delivers his word, Daniel is commanded to be in a state of alertness. Earlier, in the eighth chapter, Daniel was in a prone position, with his face toward the ground. Before Gabriel delivered his message, he touched the prophet, setting him “upright” (Dan 8:18). Now, another messenger summons Daniel into a state of optimum alertness.

This is a heavenly manner – to speak to men when they are alert. Before the Lord spoke to Ezekiel, He told him “Stand upon thy feet” (Ezek 2:1). When the Spirit entered into Ezekiel, He set the prophet upon his feet (Ezek 3:24). When Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus, he was smitten to the ground. After identifying Himself, Jesus said, “Rise, and stand upon thy feet” (Acts 26:16).

It is not proper for us to attempt to impose procedures upon our brethren related to hearing the Word of God. However, it is proper to encourage one another to be in a state of alertness, subduing any inclination to be casual and undisciplined in the presence of the Lord.

UNTO THEE I AM NOW SENT

“ 11d . . . for unto thee am I now sent.” Whether men wish to admit it or not, there have been discretionary messages sent from heaven to earth – messages that were eventually to be communicated to all of the people of God, yet which came initially to selected individuals. The message being delivered is that kind of word.

This is seen throughout the Word of God. Special messages were received by Noah (Gen 7:1), Abraham (Gen 15:1), Jacob (Gen 35:10), Moses (Ex 3:14), and the Apostles and Prophets (Eph 3:5). Holy angels have been sent to specific individuals, carrying specific messages. Scripture records such messages being brought to Hagar (Gen 16:9), Abraham (Gen 22:11), Gideon (Judges 6:12), Elijah (1 Kgs 19:5-7), Zechariah (Zech 1:9), Zecharias (Lk 1:19), Mary (Lk 1:26), Peter (Acts 12:7-8), John (Rev 1:1), and others.

There are people who are especially favored of God. Their record is intended to encourage the people of God to live in such a manner as to receive more than an average portion from God. Even in the wilderness, God sent manna that was to be gathered by everyone “according to his eating” – or as much as he could eat (Ex 16:21). This is still the manner of the kingdom. What an individual receives from God is largely determined by their appetite for the things of God. This is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections” NKJV (2 Cor 6:12).

Daniel had cultured an appetite for the things of God, and a keen interest in the Temple, city, and people of God. He had also proved to be a good custodian of the truth, responding to it in a manner that brought glory to God. Therefore, the Lord is sending understanding to Daniel that ordinary men were not given.

It might be well to say here that many people remain in a state of perpetual spiritual ignorance simply because they have no appetite for the truth of God. If you have personally been seeing more of the things of God, it is largely owing to your desire to know them.

I STOOD TREMBLING

“ 11e And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.” Other versions read, “I stood up trembling.”

When Daniel stood to his feet, he was shaking and not yet recovered from falling to the ground. Yet, at the touch and word of the angel he marshaled all of his strength and stood up. He was strengthened by degrees – first he fell face down on the ground. Then he was raised to his hands and knees. Now he stands upright and in a state of trembling.

There is a form of personal discipline revealed in this text. Daniel was both weak and fearful, yet he rose to his feet, even though tottering and physically unstable. His weakness will not be perpetual, nor will yours if you will but linger in the presence of the Lord in a state of alertness and readiness.

The impact of man's exposure to heavenly influences confirms his fallen state. Prior to the fall, there is no evidence that Adam was in any way moved to fear and trembling by the presence of the Lord. However, once sin entered into the world, trembling did as well.

This is the trembling of the flesh, which is disconcerted in the presence of heavenly influences. When the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush, "Moses trembled" (Acts 7:32). At Mount Sinai, "all the people that was in the camp trembled" (Ex 19:16). When Habakkuk heard from the Lord, he "trembled" within and without (Hab 3:16). When the holy women went to the sepulcher where Jesus had been laid, they received a message from an angel and "trembled and were amazed" (Mk 16:8).

I understand that this experience can be stated in such a manner as to promote fear. However, we must carefully avoid leaving men afraid to hear from God, receive understanding from Him, or dwell in His presence. It is the flesh that is weak, not the spirit (Matt 26:41)! It is the outward man that is perishing, not the inward man (2 Cor 4:16)! Those who believe on the Lord will not be confounded, even though their flesh may be caused to tremble (1 Pet 2:6). That is the promise of God! It is most helpful to know these things.

FROM THE FIRST DAY

“ 12 Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.”

We now embark on a most intriguing text of Scripture. We will be given a rare glimpse behind the scenes – a glance at some of the involvements of answered prayer. It will become apparent why this world is not to be our primary frame of reference. This world is a subordinate one, being subject to

higher and more powerful influences – both good and evil.

FEAR NOT, DANIEL

“ 12a Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel . . . ”

Once again I want to call attention to the manner in which heaven addresses the prophet. Although he was called “Belteshazzer” upon earth (1:7; 2:26; 4:8,9,18,19; 5:12; 10:1), he is never so addressed by heaven! The first time a heavenly personality addressed Daniel is recorded in the previous chapter. Gabriel said, “O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding” (9:22). The second time is in our text: “O Daniel, a man greatly beloved” (10:11). The messages, therefore, were not brought to him because of his world prominence or achievement, which were encapsulated in the name “Belteshazzar.” It was Daniel’s faith and identity with the seed of Abraham that qualified him for this most unique message.

“Fear Not”

Notice the perception of the angel. Daniel is trembling, and the heavenly messenger immediately seeks to put him at ease. He has brought a blessing, not a curse, and Daniel will be the better for what he is about to receive, not the worse. This was necessary because “fear hath torment” (1 John 4:13), distracting both heart and soul. If ever much is to be heard and realized from the Lord, fear must give way to confidence and peace. Thus the Lord Jesus, following His resurrection, often announced Himself by saying, “Peace be unto you” (Lk 24:36; John 20:19,21,28).

The fact that heaven jars upon the flesh is seen in these familiar words. Nearly every favorable heavenly manifestation is attended by the words “Fear not!” These words were not spoken to Adam and Eve, Cain, Pharaoh, and the likes. They were always a prelude to a blessing, a benefit, something good that was about to be experienced.

The first person of Scriptural record to hear these words was Abraham (Gen 15:1). Others include Hagar (Gen 21:17), Isaac (Gen 26:24), Jacob (Gen 46:3), Joshua (Josh 8:3), Gideon (Judges 6:23), Joseph (Matt 1:20), the women who went to Jesus’ tomb (Matt 28:5), Zecharias (Lk 1:13), Mary (Lk 1:30), the shepherds who heard of Jesus’ birth (Lk 2:10), Simon Peter (Lk 5:10), Jairus (Lk 8:50), the Apostles (Lk 12:32), Paul (Acts 27:24), and John (Rev 1:17).

FROM THE FIRST DAY

“ 12b . . . for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand.” Other versions read, “set your heart to understand,” NKJV “set your mind to gain understanding,” NIV “gave your heart to getting wisdom,” BBE and “began to pray for understanding.” NLT

Here we see how Daniel's prayer had an instant affect in heaven, even though it appeared to be vain on the earth. The "first day" took place in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, during the first few days of the first month (10:1,4). It was then that Daniel mourned before the Lord for three full weeks (10:2). We know this is the period to which the angel refers, because that three week period is described as the time that the angel was detained (v 13).

It is generally agreed that the third year of Cyrus' reign was approximately the 73 rd year of Daniel's captivity. If he was about thirteen when taken into captivity, that would make him eighty-six years of age at this time. That would be the youngest possible estimate. Yet, even in the proximity of ninety years of age, Daniel was alert, sensitive, and in possession of a great faith. At that mature age, Daniel "set his heart to understand."

Setting the Heart to Understand

Such a determination to gain understanding is rare at any age. Ponder how unique it was for an old man who was a government official in a land to which he had been carried captive seventy-three years before.

Note, the angel identifies why Daniel was praying – "to understand." In his own record, Daniel said he was "mourning three full weeks" (10:2). Yet, he was not simply lamenting, but was seeking for understanding concerning the determined purposes of God.

From this, we see that the appropriation of true understanding involves the mortification of the flesh. It is by no means easy to learn the things of God while pampering the flesh. This is particularly true when spiritual impoverished times are being experienced, and the religious masses are dwelling at a distance from the Lord. The blanket of mediocrity and indifference smothers the learning process – particularly when it relates the purpose of God.

To "set" the heart, is to assign an objective to the heart. It is to unclutter the heart of distracting things, and determine to be occupied with higher matters. This is an imperative posture. A heavenly messenger said to Ezekiel, "set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee; for to the intent that I might show them unto thee art thou brought hither" (Ezek 40:4).

The things of God are high above the things of this world. As it is written, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9). That circumstance demands a determined mind and a focused heart. When it comes to the things of God, wandering minds are empty ones! God simply will not vouchsafe sacred truth to a double minded man (James 1:6-8).

While this is not something that can be systematized or put into a convenient routine of study, it does provide an explanation for why some people do not appropriate much understanding of the things of God . This is another reason why the current craze of religious entertainment is to be avoided. It allows for a divided mind, and does not encourage determined hearts. But if a person is going to be taught by God, both of those qualities must be found in some measure.

TO CHASTEN THYSELF

“ 12c . . . and to chasten thyself before thy God . . . ” Other versions read, “humble yourself,” NKJV “making yourself poor in spirit,” BBE “afflict thyself,” DOUAY and “resolved to mortify yourself.” NJB

Again, note how the angel is interpreting the last three weeks of Daniel’s activity. Daniel said he “mourned three full weeks.” The angel says he has set his heart “to understanding,” and had “chastened” himself. On earth, Daniel had been mourning for three weeks. In heaven, it was seen as setting his heart to understand, and chastening, or humbling, himself for three full weeks. David spoke of a time when he “wept” and “chastened” his soul with fasting (Psa 69:10).

Recently, there has been much talk in the Christian community about Second Chronicles 7:14. “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves , and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chron 7:14). This is a most noble consideration, and a call to enter into the spirit of this promise is in every way right. When we consider the humbling of ourselves in view of the text before us, we will obtain a correct picture of what is involved in such activity. This is not something that is casually achieved, but requires the setting of the heart and the chastening of the body. The flesh must be subordinated!

THY WORDS WERE HEARD

“ 12d . . . thy words were heard . . . ” Herein is a marvelous thing: Daniel’s words were heard in heaven! Mark you, Daniel did not say he used words. He said he “mourned for three full weeks.” His mourning, however, was expressed in words, not merely wordless emotions. He had done exactly what the Lord had admonished through Hosea. “ Take with you words , and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips” (Hosea 14:2).

I AM COME FOR THY WORDS

“ 12e . . . and I am come for thy words.” Other versions read, “I have come because of your words,” NKJV “I have come in response to your words,” NASB “I am come for thy words’ sake,” ASV “and your words are the reason why I have come,” NJB and “I have come in answer to your prayer,” NLT

This is not an assessment made by a man, but the perception of an angel. Words from a man brought a messenger from heaven! Some imagine that Divine activity is always arbitrary, having nothing to do with the activities of holy men. But this text confirms this is not true. The words of Daniel were the reason why this messenger was sent – from the very first day that Daniel had set his heart to understand, and had chastened himself.

The words of the angel confirm that Daniel was a righteous man who prayed fervently, for “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). He sought for understanding that God intended to give. This is the heavenly manner. As it is written, “I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Ezek 36:36-37). Other versions read, “I will let the house of Israel ask Me to do for them,” NASB “I will yield to the plea of the house of Israel to do this for them,” NIV and “The children of Israel will again make prayer to me for this, that I may do it for them.” BBE

The Divine economy provides for the effective supplications and intercessions of men. There are matters related to the purpose of God that are not intended to remain secret. There are Divine secrets that the Lord wants to tell. As it is written, “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him.” And again, “but His secret is with the righteous.” And again, “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but He revealeth his secret unto His servants the prophets” (Psa 25:14; Prov 3:32; Amos 3:7).

The picture you receive is one of heaven waiting for someone to ask for understanding in this matter. God is, in a sense, waiting “that He may be gracious” (Isa 30:18). There are realities to be made known that only require a seeking soul, and hungry and thirsty spirit, and a person who is willing to subdue all competing inclinations in order that he might understand things God desires to make known.

It seems to me that many spiritual quests are too shallow – too much on the surface of life. They often lack both focus and energy. This is largely owing to the type of religion that is dominant in our time. It is not challenging enough to elicit zeal from the hearts of men. How often do you hear of a person who sets their heart to understand something God has revealed? This is precisely what Daniel has done, depriving himself of lawful pleasantries for three full weeks. He has readied himself to hear from God.

THE PRINCE OF PERSIA

“ 13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.”

While Daniel was praying, great struggles and conflicts were taking place in “high places.” There is no way Daniel could know of the details of this conflict on his own. There are no human capacities capable of probing and analyzing the realm of which the angel now speaks.

From the experiential point of view, the heavens had been silent for “three full weeks.” It appeared as though an answer was being purposefully delayed. Yet, this was not the case at all. We will see that more is involved in getting strategic answers to the sons of men than at first appears.

THE PRINCE OF THE KINGDOM OF PERSIA

“13a But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days.” Other versions read, “withstanding me for twenty-one days,” NASB “resisted me for twenty-one days,” NIV “opposed me for twenty-one days,” NRSV “put himself against me for twenty-one days,” BBE and “for twenty-one days the spirit-prince of Persia blocked my way.” NLT

First, it ought to be noted how gracious the Lord is to provide an explanation for a delay in the answer to Daniel’s prayer. God certainly is not under obligation to give account of His matters, and does not often do so (Job 33:13). Yet, because Daniel is “greatly beloved,” additional understanding will be ministered to him. Not only will the answer to his prayer be granted, he will also learn something of what was involved in the answer being brought to him.

The Prince of Persia

Some are of the opinion that “the prince of Persia” was Cyrus. However, the very notion that any earthly potentate could withstand or hinder a holy angel of any rank for twenty-one days seems to me to be an exercise of unusual folly. We have no record in Scripture of any mortal being able to successfully detain any angels, who cannot die (Lk 20:36). Angels are said to “excel in strength” (Psa 103:20), but such is not true if any king can hinder them. Peter also said the angels are “greater in power and might” (2 Pet 2:11).

Although it is not categorically said that the messenger of this chapter was an angel, it is said that he was sent to Daniel because his prayer was heard (10:12). Further he will affirm the battle of which he speaks is in some other place, where Michael, one of the chief angels, came to help him, and where he would return. This conflict, therefore, was not an earthly one, nor was it fought in an earthly arena. Therefore, the prince of reference cannot be Cyrus, his son Cambyses, or any other worldly dignitary. It simply is not possible for earthly dignitaries to hinder heavenly powers for twenty-one days.

This was a spiritual principality and power, the likes of which presently engage the saints of God (Eph 6:12). The very thought that any personality could withstand a holy angel for twenty days is staggering. It confirms the magnitude of the warfare into which we have been called.

Some Clarification from Daniel

Isaiah was given a hint of the correlation between the kings of the earth and higher principalities and powers. While his words do not provide a complete array of answers for the curious, they do open for us the vastness of the realm of personalities. Here are his words. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth” (Isa 24:21). Other versions read, “the host of heaven, on high, and the kings of the earth, on earth,” NASB and “the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below,” NIV

Were it not for our text, it might be easy to explain Isaiah’s words by saying the heavenly host is a metaphorical way of speaking about the kings of the earth – and, indeed, some have chosen to do this. However, Daniel is shown a clear correlation between powers in high realms and those upon the earth. There was a “prince of Persia” who stood against the angels of God. Satan is also called “the prince of the POWER OF THE AIR,” or “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” NIV (Eph 2:2). Other versions read “powers of the air,” ASV “authority of the air,” DARBY and YLT The word “power ”means decision-making authority. Thus we are told that Satan heads up an entire hierarchy of evil, where decisions are made and influence is wrought in the earth. This is one of the means by which he “works in the children of disobedience” (Eph 2:2b).

There is also Michael “the great prince” who stands for the Israelites (Dan 12:1). Zechariah was also introduced to “four spirits of the heavens” who wrought works upon the earth (Zech 6:5-7).

Wicked Principalities and Powers

Just as surely as there are angelic influences that shape the experiences and successes of the children of God (Ex 23:23; 32:34; Dan 3:28; Acts 8:26; 12:11), so there are wicked principalities and powers who stand behind the propagation of darkness and iniquity. Thus we read of “the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12). These are not men, for men do not “rule” darkness. Rather, they are overcome by it. Some of these evil powers promote doctrines within the professed church, i.e. “doctrines of demons” (1 Tim 4:1). Others promote sinful expressions, and are thus called “spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph 6:12). But their influence is not limited to this world. Daniel is now hearing of one of these dark powers who fought against him somewhere between heaven and earth.

The extent to which these powers influence the sons of men is not fully revealed. Admittedly, there is an element of mystery about them. However, the text before us provides explanations that are not made known elsewhere. We can see that more is involved in the activities of earth than the intentions and deeds of men. Things that happen here sometimes draw the attention of Satanic powers, and provoke lofty battles in the higher realms.

Get the Picture

Let us not fail to get the picture that is being presented. Daniel had been praying for three full weeks. From the very first of his supplication, a holy angel was dispatched to bring understanding to Daniel. That angel was detained for twenty-one days by one referred to as “the prince of Persia.” Remember, this is the taking place in the third year of Cyrus, who was “the king of Persia” (2 Chron 36:22; Dan 10:1). This power, then was associated with the Persian rule. He obviously saw the message being brought to Daniel as a threat to his domain, and thus engaged in an initiative against it.

We must keep in mind that Daniel was making supplication to the Lord for His Temple, His city, and His people. This “prince of Persia,” therefore, was aligned against these things pertaining to God, and thus sought to hinder the heavenly messenger that was sent because of Daniel’s words.

How Much Is Known By These Powers?

How much did the “prince of Persia” know about what was being brought to Daniel? God does not reveal the extent of Satan’s knowledge, nor that of the spirits over which he rules. However, enough is said about him for us to know he is not to be treated as though he was ignorant, and the powers over which he presides unversed. Their view of the world and those who dwell in it is not be considered inconsequential. If we are, for example, “ignorant of his devices,” he can “get an advantage of us” (2 Cor 2:11).

The “prince of Persia” knew that something was being brought to earth. He apparently knew the one to whom it was being sent, and the messenger that was bringing it. He was aware that the whole matter impinged upon his territory, and therefore fought vigorously against it.

There is no room for naivety and simplicity in the child of God. The powers against which we are aligned require us to be “sober and vigilant” (1 Pet 5:8). Their presence demands that we “put on the whole armor of God” – Divinely appointed protection for our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The reason for this protection is clearly stated: “that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil . For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:11-12). “Schemes” imply intelligence, strategy, knowledge, and awareness.

Those in Christ Jesus must be told that a lack of interest and diligence will guarantee Satan’s success. Jesus has not promised Divine protection to the slothful and lukewarm. The record before us should confirm this to our hearts.

MICHAEL, ONE OF THE CHIEF PRINCES

“ 13b . . . but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me . . . ”

It should not surprise us that there is some form of hierarchy among the angels. The devil’s hosts have “princes,” and so do the holy angels. A “chief” is defined as “first, primary, or foremost.”

STRONGS The word “prince” means ruler, leader, chieftain, and captain. **STRONGS** Michael, then, was one of the foremost or primary leaders or captains, not merely a foremost angel. Among those of high rank, Michael was a chief.

Elsewhere, we learn that Michael is “the archangel” (Jude 1:9), or “chief angel.” There are only two references to “archangel” in all of Scripture. Both of them say “THE archangel.” “The Lord Himself shall descend with the voice of THE ARCHANGEL” (1 Thess 4:16), and “Yet Michael THE ARCHANGEL, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee” (Jude 1:9). Judging from these verses, it is quite possible that Michael is the only archangel – the chief of all of the angels.

If this is true, it accentuates even more the significance of the message being brought to Daniel. The leading angel (at the most), or a leading angel (at the least) came to help the angel who was to deliver the message to Daniel. I can only surmise how fierce the battle must have been.

The Jews Encountered Trouble

On earth, the building of the Temple would be halted. Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe had written a letter “against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king.” They were joined in the diabolical scheme by “the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites, and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time” (Ezra 4:9)-10). They charged the Jews were “building the rebellious and the bad city,” setting up the “walls again.” Their letter continued, “then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings” (Ezra 4:13). They urged the king to search the books, to confirm Jerusalem was “hurtful unto kings and provinces,” and that they had “moved sedition with” the city “of old time, for which cause the city was destroyed.”

Artaxerxes received the letter, believed what it said, and delivered this order to Rehum and Shimshai. “Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded , until another commandment shall be given from me. Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?” (Ezra 4:21-22). The tragic result is record by Ezra. “Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia” (Ezra 4:24). The work was suspended for seven years (528-521 B.C.). This was approximately ten years after the account of this chapter, and revealed the fierceness and duration of the battle with “the prince of Persia.”

All of this occurred approximately ten years after Daniel’s vision, and was doubtless the direct result of the influence of “the prince of Persia.” The Persians remained in power until The kingdom of Greece arose. But prior to this shift of power, “the prince of Persia” sought to do evil to the Jews. We

know this is the case, because the explanation given to Daniel regarded the welfare of the people of God. This great battle not only was an effort to thwart the heavenly message from being brought to Daniel, but to clear the way to do evil to the people of God as well.

I REMAINED THERE

“ 13c . . . and I remained there with the kings of Persia.” Other versions read, “I had been left alone with the kings of Persia,” NKJV “I was detained there with the king of Persia,” NIV “and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia,” NRSV “when I came he was still there with the angel of the kings of Persia,” BBE “and I remained there by the king of the Persians,” DOUAY “and I have remained there near the kings of Persia.” YLT

Here the various versions throw a mantle of confusion over the text. There are at least for different views shown.

- Prior to the coming of Gabriel, the angel had been left alone with the kings (plural) of Persia – the kings on earth.
- Prior to the coming of Gabriel, the angel had been grappling with the “prince ”of Persia by himself.
- When the angel left the battle to come to Daniel, Michael was still fighting against “the prince of Persia.”
- All along, the angel had remained with the “kings of Persia” – the earthly rulers.

There is a sense in which every view contains some truth. The point of the text seems to be that this angel fought against initiatives against the Jews by the Persians – namely the kings recorded in Ezra 4). At the beginning of the Persian rule, Cyrus marshaled the people, and underwrote the rebuilding of the Temple as God had commissioned him (Ezra 1:1-4). That was two or three years before the word now being delivered to Daniel (this is now the third year of Cyrus – 10:1). It was at this very time that the Samaritans interfered with the Temple builders. It is written, they “And hired counselors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia” (Ezra 4:5).

The “kings of Persia” refer to Cyrus (Daniel and Zerubbabel’s time – Dan 6:28; Ezra 4:3), Artaxexes (Ezra and Nehemiah’s time) Ahasurerus (Esther’s time – Esth 1:2-3), and Darius (king of Persia, not the Mede – Ezra 4:5,24). The point is that this angel stood by these kings, causing them to have more favor toward the Jews than the hatred evinced by “the prince of Persia.” This is precisely why “Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes” issued commands to “build” and “finish” the house of God (Ezra 6:14). Further, the eleventh chapter will begin with this very angel declaring he had stood to “confirm and strengthen Darius the Mede” (Dan 11:1).

This angel fought vigorously for the people of God, while Daniel prayed, and after he delivered this message to the prophet. This is why the Temple was built, the people spared in Esther's day, and the efforts of the Samaritans and others to stop the building of the Temple and the wall thwarted! We should not fail to note that Daniel entered into this matter also. He had prayed earnestly for the Temple, Jerusalem, and the children of God. He was to this battling angel like Aaron and Hur were to Moses when Joshua fought against the Amalekites (Ex 17:10-13). This is a remarkable confirmation of God calling holy men and women into His purpose. It is something that has been accelerated in Christ Jesus.

SPIRITUAL POWERS AND GOVERNMENTS

The governments of this world do not stand on their own. There are spiritual powers behind them, just as surely as there was behind Persia, and is behind Israel, whose prince is Michael (Dan 12:1). When there is a shift of political power, some spiritual prince has been cast down. This is involved in the removal of kings by God (Dan 2:21).

Also, when ill-will is shown toward the people of faith, the influence of the powers of darkness is at work. Additionally, when favor is shown toward them, the holy angels have stood up for the people, protecting them from the evil intentions of Satan's hosts. If things appear to be less than favorable, rest assured, they would have been much worse if the hosts of darkness were able to fulfill their will without restraint.

The Saints Have A Role

There is a role the saints play in all of this. They are wrestling "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12). Their fervent and effectual prayers play a powerful role in the shaping of the events of this world.

This is depicted in the Revelation given to John when he was exiled on Patmos. When the Lamb of God had taken the book of destiny from the hand of God Himself, twenty four lofty personalities fell before Him, "having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints" (Rev 5:8). Immediately after that, all manner of activity broke out upon the earth. Again, prior to the pouring forth of judgments upon the earth, an angel is seen who is to offer much incense "with the prayers of all saints." The smoke of the incense and prayers, it is written, "ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Rev 8:3-4). This is a vision showing the involvement of the saints in the government of this world. It is not immediate, but is indirect just like that of Daniel.

This is a very neglected privilege in the contemporary church. I am persuaded this condition is the fruit of not knowing the nature of the warfare that is being waged in high places.

TO MAKE THEE UNDERSTAND

“ 14 Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.”

We will now see the extent of angelic knowledge – knowledge that has been given to them by the Lord, and it no doubt involves their awareness of what is being done by the Lord. Notice that those who come from God always speak with the greatest degree of assurance. They are never of doubtful mind, and speak with confidence. In my understanding, this is one of the marvelous results of dwelling in the courts of the Lord. If it is true that “in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa 36:9), then what wondrous things those celestial spirits must be given to see.

TO MAKE THEE UNDERSTAND

“ 14a Now I am come to make thee understand. . .” Other versions read, “ give you an understanding,” NASB “ explain to you,” NIV “ help you understand,” NRSV “to teach thee,” DOUAY “to inform thee,” Septuagint and “to cause thee to understand.” YLT

What the heavenly messenger will now tell Daniel could not otherwise be known. This is not something he could calculate, like he did concerning the end of the captivity from the writings of Jeremiah. It is not something he could reason out, having received numerous insights over the last seventy-three years concerning the very kingdoms of which the angel will speak. There are matters men must be made to understand !

The messenger has come to administer understanding – and he has come because of Daniel’s “words” (verse 12). Do not marvel at this, for it is a pattern seen everywhere in God’s word. The Psalmist prayed, “Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts” (Psa 119:27). Isaiah described the kind of whom God will make to understand. “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts” (Isa 28:9). In extremely primitive spiritual times Job cried out, “Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6:24). After writing to Timothy a remarkable expositions of the salvation of God, Paul said, “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things” (2 Tim 2:7). He prayed for the people of God to be given understanding (Eph 1:18; Col 1:9). Jesus Christ is said to have come and “given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1 John 5:20).

Remember, this is not the first revelation given to Daniel. He has heard before concerning the very kingdoms of which the angel will now speak. He has heard about the Jews, Persia, and Greece –

and now he will be caused to understand more. He was not able to dig the meaning out of the Hebrew. It could not be derived from contextual considerations, or by comparing parallel revelations. This was something that had to be brought down from heaven to him. It could not be worked up from the earth, discovered by astute reasoning or a disciplined frame of mind.

It is important that the people of God come to a point where they associate truth with God, and the understanding of it with a gift from Him.

WHAT SHALL BEFALL THY PEOPLE

“ 14b . . . what shall befall thy people in the latter days . . . ” Other versions read, “what will happen to your people in the latter days ,” NKJV “what will happen to your people in the future. ” NIV “at the end of days ,” NRSV “in the final days ,” NJB and “in the latter end of the days .” YLT

Daniel had besought the Lord concerning His people: “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name” (Dan 9:19). He had received an initial response to his petition from the mighty angel Gabriel himself, who was caused to fly swiftly to him (9:21). Now, more is given to the aging prophet.

Daniel has the people in his heart, just as Paul who said centuries later, “That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Rom 9:2-3). In measure, the degree of fellowship a person has with the Living God can be seen in his attitude toward the Jews. No person who has come into the presence of the Lord has failed to plead for these people. This includes such spiritual notables as Moses (Psa 106:23), Samuel (1 Sam 12:23), David (2 Sam 24:17), Solomon (1 Kgs 8:29), Isaiah (), Jeremiah (Jer 14:7-22), Ezra (Ezra 9:5-15), Nehemiah (Neh 1:4-9), Amos (Amos 7:2), and Paul (Rom 10:1).

And now the Lord, who has engraved these people upon His hands (Isa 49:16), who had held out His gracious hands to them all the day, in spite of their consistent sin (Rom 10:21), sends a messenger to tell Daniel what will befall this people in the later days.

THE VISION IS FOR MANY DAYS

“ 14b . . . for yet the vision is for many days.” Other versions read, “the vision refers to many days yet to come,” NKJV “for the vision pertains to the days yet future,” NASB and “the vision concerns the time yet to come.” NRSV

Here we see something of both God and Daniel. God is desirous to share His secret with someone, and Daniel is desirous to know it. Even though these things will not occur in Daniel’s time, yet the Lord wants to give him an understanding of them. As for Daniel, he has a keen interest in his own people, and therefore will be a good custodian of the understanding that will be ministered to him.

The heart is more versatile than the mind. It can leap forward, deriving great benefit from things to come. That is because man believes “with the heart” (Rom 10:10). Those who see no value in things that will happen in the future do not have good hearts. Nor, indeed, is their faith what it ought to be, if they have faith at all. In the kingdom of God, relevancy is determined by the will of God, not the experience of men – and God does have a will for the people of Israel.

Although Daniel no doubt prayed for a more immediate answer, yet the messenger informs him much more is yet to take place. His words carry the same import as those of the Lord Jesus, when He spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the world, and His own return. After enumerating a number of disruptive events, He said, “for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet ” (Matt 24:6).

There is an “eternal purpose” that is driving the affairs of this world (Eph 3:11). It is detailed, and, as will be confirmed, it is cast in stone. The people of Israel are involved in this purpose, and that is why this information is being brought to Daniel. This word will also confirm the deep love of the Lord for this people, as Michael their prince will stand up in their behalf (12:1).

AN APPLICATION

Passages such as this should destroy any notion that God is heartless and inconsiderate of His people. Though this charge is often hurled at the Lord, it is altogether false. This very text was used to encourage the people of God for nearly five hundred years after Daniel had left the world’s stage. It proved to be a sweet elixir when no other prophets were raised up – a period of Divine silence, which all godly people dread.

Once again, the words of Amos are fulfilled: “Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets” NIV (Amos 3:7).

I BECAME DUMB

“ 15 And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb.”

Daniel will once again record his reaction to the word of the Lord. We will find that the flesh has gained no strength, and still is not able to hold up when touched by heavenly influences. The flesh “profits nothing,” as we will see. It will not be able to gain anything from this message. Instead of getting better, the flesh will get worse, losing both strength and capacity.

I SET MY FACE TOWARD THE GROUND

“ 15a And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground . . . ” Other versions read, “I turned my face toward the ground,” NKJV “I bowed with my face toward the ground,” NIV and “I kept my face turned to the earth.” BBE

Notice the expression “such words.” Other versions read “according to these words,” NASB and “while he was speaking these words.” NRSV The verse is not intended to indicate that the message was delivered completely, for much more is going to be said. The idea is that in the middle of the communication, Daniel was greatly humbled and became unable to speak.

I gather from this response that the angel did not speak to Daniel in a conversational and unimpressive tone. Already his appearance had caused Daniel to faint, now his words have a calculated effect upon his flesh also. It also appears that the answer to Daniel’s prayer was most unusual. A heavenly messenger was dispatched, his appearance was devastating to the flesh, and a touch from the messenger raised him to his hands and knees. He is told to stand upright, is provided with an explanation of the delay, and is told that the things he will hear will not happen for a long time. Nothing about the whole experience conforms to the wisdom of men. This is not how the flesh would deliver a message – even if it could.

I BECAME DUMB

“ 15b . . . and I became dumb.” Other versions read, “became speechless,” NKJV “was speechless,” NIV “was unable to say anything,” BBE “held my peace,” DOUAY “held my tongue,” GENEVA and “without saying a word.” NJB

The idea is not that Daniel merely lost the ability to speak, but that he could think of nothing to say – the angel’s word left him speechless. His natural powers, both of reason and of speaking, dried up in the wake of this heavenly messenger. Job had the same experience, but expressed it another way. After hearing from God, he said, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth” (Job 40:4).

Heavenly communication withers the natural capacities. Flesh is too frail to contain it. In one of the Lord’s parables, he spoke of a man who entered the wedding feast without a garment. When he was asked, “And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?” he “was speechless” – unable to respond to the poignant words (Mat 22:12). A similar thing happened to those journeying with Saul of Tarsus. When the Lord appeared to Saul the those with him “stood

speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man” (Acts 9:7).

MY LIPS WERE TOUCHED, AND MY MOUTH OPENED

“ 16 And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.”

The graciousness of the Lord is seen here. As we proceed through this text, we will find this is the same angel that had spoken to him. The great power and glory of the angel had adversely affected Daniel. Yet that powerful angel was able to be gentle with the aged prophet. No communication could pass from Daniel to the angel until he was strengthened.

TOUCHED MY LIPS

“ 16a And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips . . . ” Some versions say “my mouth.” NIV, NRSV

This is now the fourth time Daniel has been “touched” by a heavenly being (8:18; 9:21; 10:10,16). Each time he has regained strength. The angelic touch has not driven him further into disability, therefore confirming the beneficent intentions of the Lord.

Isaiah the prophet also experienced his lips being touched. After seeing the Lord high and lifted up, he declared he was a man of unclean lips, and dwelt in the midst of a people of unclean lips. When his lips were touched a live coal from the altar, he was told, “thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged” (Isa 6:6-7). What a marvelous thing took place in the heavenlies!

In Daniel’s case, the effect was different. A touch of his lips caused him to be able to speak again. Among other things, this confirms the superiority of heaven to earth, or spirit to flesh, and of angels to men.

I SAID UNTO HIM

“ 16b . . . then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me . . . ”

Immediately, Daniel is able to speak, and knows what to say. Although he is in the presence of a messenger from heaven, he is still forward to speak, for his heart is right, and his spirit has been nurtured in the ways of the Lord. What will he say? Will he complain? Will he make an excuse for what has happened to him? Indeed, he will do precisely what the woman with the issue of blood told Jesus. He will tell the messenger “all the truth” (Mark 5:33).

My Sorrows Are Turned Upon Me

“ 16c . . . O my lord, by the vision.” Other versions read, “because of the vision,” NKJV and “as a result of the vision.” NASB

Let me again emphasize the abrasiveness of heaven to the flesh! Here was a gracious messenger from heaven, sent with a special answer to Daniel’s prayer. Yet, the impact upon Daniel is not pleasant. This is nothing less than the result of coming short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Praise God, we shall be freed from this kind of response when we are forever with the Lord!

Notice that Daniel calls the angel “lord.” This is “lord” in the subordinate sense, and does not refer to the Lord God. All of the versions use the word with a lower case “l,” indicating this was a created being, and not the Lord of glory. Notwithstanding, this is an acknowledgment of the superiority of the angelic order to that of man. It is written that man was “made a little lower than the angels” (Psa 8:5). Zechariah, when confronted with a holy angel, called him “lord” five times (Zech 1:9; 4:4,5,13; 6:4).

My Sorrows

“ . . . my sorrows are turned upon me . . . ” Other versions read, “my sorrows have overwhelmed me,” NKJV “ anguish has come upon me,” NASB “I am overcome with anguish,” NIV “such pains have come upon me,” NRSV “my sorrows have returned upon me ,” GENEVA “I am terrified by the vision,” NLT and “I have been seized with pangs .” TNK

Daniel had just spent three weeks mourning before the Lord and chastening himself. Prior to that, he had spent considerable time confessing his own sin and that of his people (9:20). Now the feelings of sorrow and contempt had come back upon him. The magnitude of even the subdued glory of this angel must have been remarkable. It was more than the flesh could bear. Nature was not adequate for the occasion.

Once again his “comeliness was turned” in him “into corruption.” It was like the surge of a great wave coming upon him – deep calling to deep – as a sense of his own corruption was brought out by the magnificence of this angel. The clash of spirit with flesh was evident!

When men have high estimations of themselves, it is because they do not stand in the presence of the Lord, and are unaware of His Person. He was shaken down to the core of his very person.

I Have Retained No Strength

“ 16d . . . and I have retained no strength.” Other versions read, “I was helpless,” NIV “I have no more strength,” BBE “cannot summon strength,” TNK and “retained no power.” YLT

This was no time to be sorrowful and weak, but yet he was. This was the impact of purity upon the man of God. And this was after Daniel had been touched. How deeply sin has affected the human constitution!

One can only imagine the impact of heavenly purity upon those who choose to live in sin! When Jesus comes in all of His glory, this kind of reaction will be magnified many times in those who knew not God and obeyed not the Gospel of Christ. How the lost will “wail because of Him” (Rev 1:7).

How Can I Talk

“ 17a For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord?”

Daniel senses this is not a lectureship! Dialog will be required, but he does not feel as though he can do it. He was not content to remain silent, but was seeking a means to gain strength – for it takes strength to engage in heavenly dialog. However, we will find that it also takes strength to hear!

No Strength and No Breath

“ 17a . . . for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.” Fear and stupor has come over Daniel because of this August personality. It is not the fear or weakness of unbelief, but rather it is owing to his humanity. Sin has created such a chasm between the human and the Divine, that even an angel from the heavenly realm violently disrupts the the whole course of nature. Although it all seems to be hopeless, Daniel is in the presence of one who can correct the situation.

BE STRONG!

“ 18 Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he

strengthened me, 19 And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.”

It is as though the angel subdues his glory, appearing more as a man than as an angel, thereby reducing the affects of his person and message upon Daniel.

ANOTHER TOUCH

“ 18a Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me . . . ”

This is the fifth time Daniel has been touched – the third time on this occasion. A certain progression can be seen in this confrontation – from strength to strength (Psa 84:7). The important thing to see in this is that the angel did not give Daniel initial strength, leaving him to increase it on his own. The beginning of the strength came from a supernatural touch, and the increase of it did as well.

Here we have a confirmation of the manner of Divine working. From the New Covenant point of view, it is encapsulated in these words: “I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last” (Rev 22:13). And again, “Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2). And again, “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6).

The flesh cannot perfect what God has begin. Whatever the Lord starts, He also must finish, else it will not be completed. Whether Daniel would have said it in these words or not, he sensed the truth of them. He knew he would get nothing from this angelic dialog if he was not made strong.

PEACE BE UNTO THEE

“ 19a And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee . . . ”

The manner in which the angel speaks and conducts himself confirms that he is acquainted with the human condition. He knew what was required, and quickly addressed the situation.

“O man,” addresses the reason for the need of strength. It is our manhood that is our chief weakness – our natural association with Adam. While some may boast that they have not done anything particularly wrong, they still are far short of the prophet Daniel, against whom not a single sin is

recorded. Yet he was shaken to the core by the angelic confrontation.

“Greatly beloved” justifies the reason for the angel coming with a message. Such holy personalities are not sent forth indiscriminately. They know nothing of the everyone-is-the-same mentality that has crept into the church. Everyone is not “greatly beloved,” and thus everyone is not the same. The angel’s use of “greatly beloved” was no doubt used to quiet Daniel’s spirit and calm his heart. He knew that good things are brought from God to those who are loved greatly by Him.

“Fear not” confirms this was a mission of mercy, not of judgment. This is another way of saying “You have nothing to fear.” These words carry the spirit of Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Four times Jesus spoke words carrying the same import: “Be not afraid” (Matt 14:27; 17:7; Mk 6:50; John 6:20).

BE STRONG! BE STRONG!

“ 19b . . . be strong, yea, be strong.” Other versions read, “take courage and be courageous,” NASB “Be strong NOW; be strong,” NIV “Be strong and courageous,” NRSV and “Be strong and let your heart be lifted up.” BBE

This is moral and spiritual strength, and not mere physical strength. It is when the heart is strengthened, and courage rises within that the body experiences rejuvenation. This kind of strength is the opposite of being fainthearted and timorous. It moves fear out of the prominent position, causing both heart and mind to be alert and in a state of readiness.

SPEAK, FOR THOU HAST STRENGTHENED ME

“ 19c . . . And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.”

No sooner had the angel spoken than Daniel became stronger. He was no longer overcome with sorrow, weakness, or fear. Now he was ready to hear the word what was being brought to him – ready to receive the understanding that would be imparted to him.

There are messages that require great strength to receive. They cannot find lodging in a divided hard or a double mind. When the Lord interrogated Job, He started by saying, “Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me” (Job 38:3; 40:7). When Habukkuk heard of the impending Babylonian captivity he said, “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops” (Hab 3:16).

Daniel is also going to hear some hard words. He will hear of a despot that does his own will,

with none being able to withstand him (11:16). He will hear of a “vile person” who will “obtain the kingdom by flatteries” (11:21), and have a heart that “shall be against the holy covenant” (11:28). Daniel must be strong to receive such words.

A RETURN TO FIGHT AND A REVELATION OF TRUTH

“ 20 Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21 But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.”

Here the angel accommodates himself to Daniel’s weakened condition. He does not want the prophet to miss anything he says, so he once again sets his mission before him. There is no purpose to revelation if there is no alertness on the part of man and clarity on the part of the messenger.

DO YOU KNOW?

“ 20a Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee?” Other versions read, “Do you know why I have come to you?” NKJV “Do you understand why I came to you?” NASB

Before proceeding any further the messenger checks for the alertness of the prophet. He asks if he knows why he came to him. The jarring effects of the angel’s appearance could have caused Daniel to forget why this mighty angel was before him. After all, he had clearly identified his mission earlier (verses 12-14). Here the angel does what Peter did, stirring up the pure mind of the prophet (2 Pet 3:1).

We learn from this that angels are not content to simply blurt out their messages. Like their God, they speak to be understood, and they desire their message to be comprehended. I have found that when we walk in the light, we cultivate this same attitude, desiring that our words be understood.

I WILL RETURN TO FIGHT

“ 20b . . . and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia . . . ” Other versions read, “And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia,” NKJV “ Soon I will return to fight against the prince of Persia,” NIV “ Soon I must return to fight against the spirit prince of the kingdom of Persia,” NLT and “and now I turn back to fight with the head of Persia.” YLT

What a fierce opponent this angel had been fighting! Michael, one of the “chief princes,” had come to help him, freeing him up to come to Daniel after twenty-one days of battle. But the evil prince had not been deposed. The threat he posed to the people and work of God had not yet been overthrown. The angel “must” return and resume the battle. We will learn from the text that it would be a battle of significant duration.

We ought to note that great advances in the earth are often preceded by heavenly engagements of the foe. When things go well for us, there may very well have been some significant angelic warfare required for us to have those good times.

Satan and his hosts are weak compared to God and the Lord Jesus Christ – but not when compared with men. After all, Satan has succeeded in deceiving “the whole world” (1 John 5:19). We are presently living in a country in which the rulers of the darkness of this world have toppled values some thought could never be removed. Perhaps because there are not fervent and effective prayers within the church, this situation is raging out of control.

THE PRINCE OF GRECIA

“ 20b . . . and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.” Other versions read, “and when I have gone forth, the prince of Greece will come,” NKJV “so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come,” NIV and “and when I am through with him, the prince of Greece will come,” NRSV

This is the explanation for the fall of Persia and the rise of Greece. Remember, this very displacement of Persia was declared in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Persia was depicted as the “breast and arms of silver,” to be replaced by another third kingdom of brass that would “bear rule over all the earth” (2:32-39). This was seen as the Divinely appointed progression toward the Kingdom to be set up by God, which would never be destroyed.

The same displacement was again expounded in Daniel’s vision of the four beasts. In that vision Persia was depicted as the second beast, a ruthless bear, and Greece as the third beast, a swift leopard with wings on its back and four heads. The leopard succeeded the bear, with dominion being “given to it” (7:3-6). This vision emphasized the beastly or ruthless nature of the kingdoms. They would gain their dominion through aggressive military means.

The very same displacement was again portrayed with the focus upon Persia and Greece. Persia was depicted as a pushing ram with two horns, and Greece was a he goat with a single great horn. The he goat attacked the ram, breaking its horns, throwing it to the ground and ferociously trampling him. None could deliver the ram out of the hands of the he goat, or Persia from Greece. This emphasized the kingdoms from the standpoint of their rulers.

But now the angel has revealed yet another perspective of these two kingdoms. Both of them were being governed by spiritual forces – and they were not good. The “prince of Persia” and “the prince of Grecia” were spiritual powers, battling for the dominance.

Now the angel declares he is going to return to the battle with “the prince of Persia.” After his overthrow, Persia would be replaced by Greece. The change of political power would be the direct result of angelic conflict.

Greece took the dominion from Persia under the military leadership of Alexander the Great. That would take place around 336 B.C. – over two hundred years after this message was delivered to Daniel (537 B.C.) !

If the angel had been fighting with the Persian prince prior to coming to Daniel, and was to return and resume the battle, ponder the implications. That would mean there was a battle that lasted about two hundred years, for after it was over “the prince of Grecia will come!”

This indicates the strength of both Persia and Greece. They were dominated by spiritual forces that engaged the mightiest of angels – possibly as long as two centuries.

The Implications

There are Messianic implications in this account. From Satan’s viewpoint, this was an initiative to stop the God of heaven from setting up His Kingdom – the Kingdom of Christ, upon whose shoulder the government would be placed. His effort was obviously to establish global kingdoms that would forbid the fulfillment of God’s promise. The kingdoms were so powerful, being ruled by princes of darkness, that they could not possibly have been removed by competing worldly powers.

Thus, the angelic hosts are dispatched to do what men could not do. After a fierce and long battle, and at just the right time, there was a shift in power. All of this was preparing the way for the coming of Christ. There were global kingdoms, and global proclamations of the God of the Hebrews that paved the way for the Savior of the world.

THE SCRIPTURE OF TRUTH

“ 21a But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth.” Other versions read, “the writing of truth,” NASB “the Book of Truth,” NIV

What is “the Scripture,” or “Book of Truth?” It is not the Scriptures as normally perceived – or the Bible. These things had not been written on earth. That is why the angel was sent to inform Daniel of them. These are parallel to the “book” of Divine purpose that was opened by the Lord Jesus (Rev 5:1-9). It is the Book of Divine purpose and determination. The angel was saying, “I will show you what God has determined upon your people – what destiny has been determined for them.”

Among other things, this strikes down the notion that God has ceased to have any purposes for the Jews. The “Scripture of truth” is not altered, nor is it subject to change. That is signified by the seven seals of the book in Revelation. It was so tightly closed that no one knew what was in the book. Only the Lamb could unlock it. This condition forbids any change of the plan, for change could only be required if the plan became known and thwarted – both of which are impossible.

ONLY MICHAEL, YOUR PRINCE

“ 21b . . . and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.” Other versions read, “No one upholds me against these except Michael your prince,” NKJV “there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince,” NASB and “And there is not one strengthening himself with me, concerning these, except Michael your head.” YLT

This passage confirms that the ways of God are often “past finding out” (Rom 11:33). One might imagine that God would send “twelve legions of angels” to cast down “the prince of Persia .” After all, that many were available to the Lord Jesus (Matt 26:53) – and there are many more than that. It is written that there are “many angels” around the throne, even “ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” (Rev 5:11). Yet, here is a case where only one angel who sided with Israel. Of course, it was the prince, or archangel, Michael.

Perhaps Michael was the angel that stood between the Egyptians the Israelites as they readied to cross the Red Sea (Ex 14:19). He might very well have been the one God sent before Israel to bring them to the promised land (Ex 23:23,34). He is their “prince,” and stands up for them, being their defender.

The matter of which the angel speaks is the conflict with the prince and kings of Persia. It is evident that God did not seek for a swift and decisive victory here as with the armies of Sennacherib. This was an extensive and critical battle waged by two mighty angels, paving the way for the coming of the Savior.

This should also settle all disputes about Israel being totally cast off. If that is the case, Gabriel is no longer their prince. Angels are not represented in such a manner. Further, Daniel is told that close to the resurrection of the dead, Michael will “stand up, that great prince that standeth for the children of thy people” (12:1-2).

CONCLUSION

Thus the Spirit has opened something of what is involved in the government of this world by God, and now through Christ Jesus. Nothing has been left to happenstance. Further, Satan is aggressive in the governments of this world, seeking to overturn the purpose of God and frustrate His desires. But his efforts are all vain, and will come to nought.

Every child of God has reason to be of good cheer. "The battle is the Lord's" (1 Sam 17:47). It will not be long, as He will bruise Satan under our feet (Rom 16:20). Then all of the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ (Rev 11:15). Then, He will give them to the saints, who will possess the kingdom, with all of its magnificence, reigning forever with Him (Dan 7:27; Rev 22:5).

Let us be alert to what is happening in our world. When oppressive kingdoms are displaced, let us be quick to give God glory, for He is the one who has cast them down.

It is also good to learn from this lesson that delayed answers to prayer might very well involve some battles in high places. If the answer is slow in coming, keep praying as Daniel. As with him, your words are no doubt heard from the very first. However, if you are praying about critical matters associated with the purpose of God, it has no doubt aggravated the hosts of darkness, who are set to resist that will. As you pray, rest assured that heavenly hosts are doing battle in your behalf. Your prayers mingle well with their efforts.

The Prophecy of Daniel

THE FUTURE IS UNFOLDED TO DANIEL, #1

Lesson # 32

INTRODUCTION

The angel has told Daniel he is going to show him what is written in “the Book of Truth” NIV – the tablets of heaven upon which the destiny of men and nations has been written. These are Divine determinations, not what God saw would take place independently of Him. The “Book of Truth,” or “Scripture of Truth,” does not suggest that God determines everything that is done among men. Those who declare such things tend to relieve men of responsibility for their own actions. However, this is never the approach of the Holy Spirit. In fact, if every single facet and deed of life was predetermined by God, there would be no purpose for the day of judgment.

THERE ARE DIVINE DETERMINATIONS

There are things, however, that God has determined – and they are written in “the writing of truth,” NASB or “Scripture of truth.” NKJV These are determinations that flow out from His “eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord,” a “purpose” that was formed “before the world began” (Eph 3:11; 2 Tim 1:9). None of these determinations have been made independently of this purpose or the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a major milestone in life when one becomes aware of this. Life does not revolve around individuals, groups of individuals, nations, or objectives determined by men.

Already this very point has been emphasized in the book of Daniel. There is a sort of blueprint that is driving history – a Divine blueprint. Ultimately, God has purposed that “in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ , both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him” (Eph 1:10). The word “dispensation” means an administration, or economy. The emphasis of the word is management or oversight . The angel is not revealing things to Daniel that are simply going to happen. Rather, this is a revelation of God’s management of time, and the events that occur in it. Prophecy does not flow from mere foresight, but from Divine purpose and Sovereignty. This is critical to an understanding of Scripture. When speaking of God’s foreknowledge we are told, “Known to God from eternity are all His works ” NASB (Acts 15:18). Of course, He does know all the works of men as well. However, they are not the subjects of prophecy, which would make God more of a prognosticator than the One who “rules over the nations” NKJB (Psa 22:28).

Four times Daniel was told of things that had been “determined.”

- “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.” (Dan 9:24)
- “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined .” (Dan 9:26)
- “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” (Dan 9:27)
- “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.” (Dan 11:36).

There are other specific determinations revealed in Scripture.

- God “determined” the destruction of king Amaziah (2 Chron 25:25-26).
- Job confessed that man’s days are “determined,” and that bounds have been “appointed” to him (Job 14:5).
- God “determined” a destruction in Israel that would not be total, but would leave a remnant (Isa 10:23; 28:22).
- The Lord decreed that Judah would be a terror unto Egypt because of the counsel He had “determined” against it (Isa 19:17).
- The vicarious death of Christ was “determined” by God, not men (Lk 22:22; Acts 4:28).
- God “determined” the times set for “every nation of men,” and “the exact places where they should live” NIV (Acts 17:26).

The people of God must zealously seek to be freed from the notion that the world and its nations are operating on their own. There is no such thing as a will – any will – that can successfully function independently of God. A significant amount of fear, doubt, and anxiety occur because men forget “The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein ” (Psa 24:1). When “the kings of the earth” conspire against the God of heaven, and think to free themselves from His restraints, He laughs at them (Psa 2:2-4). These kings are no threat to God, but He is “terrible” to them (Psa 76:12). Now, in this day of salvation, Jesus Christ is the “King of kings” (1 Tim 6:15). Before that, they were still under heaven’s rule, whether they realized it or not, for “God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings” (Dan 2:47). God raises up kings and removes them, and none can “stay His hand, or say unto Him, ‘What doest Thou?’” (Dan 2:21; 4:35).

Thus, when we hear of the rise of despots, we are to understand they are under the strict control of God. If they reek havoc like Nebuchadnezzar, they will go no further than God has determined. If they seek to thwart His purpose like Pharaoh, Sennacherib, or Herod, they will be thrown down. The saints of God must trust Him in the matter of the kings and governments of this world. The “Scriptures of Truth” are the template for history, not the ambitions of men.

THE CENTRALITY OF THE JEWS

The Jews are central in this whole prophecy. Daniel has fervently prayed the Lord forgive, “for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name” (9:19). Daniel had set himself to pray for this people, even though they had sinned against God miserably, and were chastened for it. A messenger has been sent from heaven to declare what will befall “thy people in the latter days” (10:14).

Moses declared that when God separated “the sons of Adam,” dividing them into nations, and placing them throughout the earth, He did so with Israel in mind. “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deut 32:8).

Because this is such a central matter in the Prophets, I want to share some of the promises God has made to the Jewish people. These have not been made because of their exemplary conduct or faithfulness to Him. Rather, they are “beloved for the father’s sakes,” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Rom 11:28). These things are shared because “For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance” (Rom 11:29).

- “Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. And they shall come thither, and they shall take away all the detestable things thereof and all the abominations thereof from thence. And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh; that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.” (Ezek 11:17-20)
- “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” (Ezek 36:26-28)
- “If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.” (Jer 31:36-37)
- “Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.” (Jer 46:28)
- “For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.” (Jer 30:11)
- “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I

shall take away their sins” (Rom 11:26-27).

THE KINGDOM TAKEN FROM THEM

On this point, there is a great deal of controversy within the church. It is frequently taught that all of the promises made to Israel have been voided for them, and transferred to the Gentiles. Some of this reasoning is based upon our Lord’s words concerning the kingdom being taken from them. “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matt 21:43).

This was, indeed, a declaration of the loss of Jewish prominence, when the highest place would be taken from them and given to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus. It equates to Jerusalem being “trodden under foot of the Gentiles” (Lk 21:24), and “some of the branches” being “broken off” (Rom 11:17). Elsewhere it is referred to as Israel falling (Rom 11:11), being “cast away” (Rom 11:15), God “sparing not the natural branches” (Rom 11:21), and being “blinded” (Rom 11:7).

Not A Permanent Condition

However, Jesus gave no indication that this was to be a permanent condition. It was a most severe judgment, to be sure, but the door of hope was not closed, nor were His promises to them voided. This is substantiated in several ways.

- Jerusalem will be stomped under the feet of the Gentiles “UNTIL the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Matt 21:24).
- Their house is left desolate “UNTIL the time come when [they] shall say, ‘Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord’” (Lk 13:35).
- Blindness has happened to them “IN PART” (Rom 11:25).
- “SOME of the branches” were broken off, but the tree itself remains (Rom 11:17).
- The glow of hope is found in the expression, “And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again” (Rom 11:23).
- It is more reasonable for them to be grafted into their own tree, than that the Gentiles were grafted into it (Rom 11:24).
- Partial blindness has happened to them “UNTIL the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom 11:25).

- God’s covenant to them is to “take away their sins” (Rom 11:27).
- Israel has not stumbled, “so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious” (Rom 11:11).
- The purpose of Paul’s Apostleship to the Gentiles was actually to provoke the Jews to jealousy, in fulfillment of Moses’ prophecy (Deut 32:21; Rom 10:19; 11:13-14).

I have taken the time to say these things because an understanding of them is critical to our text. Daniel loved and prayed for Israel. God declared plans for Israel. Michael was assigned as their prince. Holy angels, according to Divine mandate, worked in their behalf. They are beloved for the father’s sakes. Now an angel comes to tell Daniel “what shall befall thy people in the later days.”

THE FIRST YEAR OF DARIUS THE MEDE

“ 11:1 Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him.”

This verse is a continuation of the eleventh chapter, The messenger from heaven is still speaking with Daniel.

We will now be taken behind the scenes – given to behold heavenly activities that impacted directly upon earthly events. The angel will do precisely what he said – make known to Daniel what had been written in the book of Divine destiny, “the Scriptures of Truth.”

This has relevance to the Messiah, in whose hand this “book” now resides. In the vision he received on Patmos, John saw this book – “the Scriptures of truth.” He first saw it as a book with writing within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. A challenge rang throughout heaven, asking if one could be found who was worthy to unseal the book and reveal its contents. None could be found (Rev 5:1-3). It was at this point that a heavenly personality stepped forward and announced that “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” had prevailed, and was thus able to “open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof” (Rev 5:5).

There are some similarities in the experiences of Daniel and John. Both were especially beloved, and were thus given insights into things to come. The insights given to them were preceded by warfare

involving someone from heaven. With Daniel, it was a holy angel engaged in war with the “prince of Persia.” With John, the warfare was between the Lord’s Christ and the hosts of darkness, whom He utterly defeated. In both cases, the book was the same, even though the segments of it that were revealed differed.

An Observation

From these things we learn something about the complexities involved in truth being made known to the sons of men. There are forces that seek to thwart heavenly messages being brought to men – and they are too strong for men. Being “taught by God” (John 6:45; 1 Thess 4:9), receiving “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph 1:17), and being given “understanding” (1 John 5:20), are not to be taken for granted. Neither, indeed, are they the result of some automated process, or the fruit of mere human inquiry.

Whatever can be concluded or deciphered independently of Divine involvement cannot be of significant consequence. Such knowledge brings no lasting advantages to those who are identified with the God of heaven. In my judgment, it is exceedingly difficult to justify the current religious emphasis upon the wisdom of men – the wisdom of this world. The average American Christian is regularly exposed to a haberdashery of religious fare that is too close to the world. It is like a garment spotted by the flesh. Many of the issues with which pulpiteers and leaders deal are not Scriptural issues. They do not require expertise in the Word of God, acquaintance with the Lord Himself, or strong faith and hope.

It will be apparent that none of these circumstances are found in our text. Daniel was wholly reliant upon the God of heaven for an understanding of what would take place, and why it would occur – even though heaven had already brought him considerable information about it. No amount of Babylonian wisdom could assist him in grasping what the angel was bringing to him.

THE FIRST YEAR

“Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede . . .”

The “I” of this text is not Daniel, but the angel who is speaking with him.

The identity of this angel is not certain. Some believe it is Gabriel, who was introduced in the eighth chapter (8:16). He later came to Daniel while he was praying (9:21). Others are persuaded it is Michael, who was an angelic “prince” of Israel (10:21). Still others see this as a unique angel whom Michael came to help in order that he might deliver this present revelation (Dan 10:13). I am inclined to the latter view, although I do not see it as a critical matter.

Daniel has already recounted something that he experienced in “the first year of Darius the son

of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes.” It was at that time that Daniel “understood by books the number of the years” of the Babylonian captivity, that they were about to be fulfilled.” Those “books” were not secular history, or the record of human prognostications. They were the prophecies of “Jeremiah the prophet,” who was inspired to write what the God of heaven was to “accomplish” (Dan 9:1-2). It is then that Daniel set his “face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes” (Dan 9:3).

Now, we will find that simultaneous with Daniel engaging in protracted and fervent prayer, an angel from heaven became active in the reign of Darius. This was not coincidence. We have here a coordination of activities between a messenger from heaven and a prophet upon earth. The prophet is praying while the angel is intervening in the affairs of men. Here is an example of angelic interaction with the God of heaven working together with “the prayers of the saints” (Rev 8:3-4). We are not able to know with certainty the fulness of the association of the prayers of Daniel with the activities of this angel. However, I am persuaded it is more profound than we are presently able to discern.

The primary thing to see here is that the angel is testifying to Daniel of his own activities during the first year of Darius. It was at that time that a significant change took place in Daniel’s perception and conduct. The angel is confirming to Daniel that the prophet was brought into involvement with the working of God. His prayers were working hand-in-hand with the powers of heaven.

TO CONFIRM AND TO STRENGTHEN

“ . . . even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him.” Other versions read, “I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him,” NASB “I took my stand to support and protect him,” NIV “I stood up to support and strengthen him,” NRSV “I was on his side to make his position safe and make him strong.” BBE

The New Living Translation represents the angel as standing to help Michael the prince: “I have been standing beside Michael as his support and defense since the first year of the reign of Darius the Mede.” The commentator Benson also holds to this view, saying “from the time that Daniel addressed those ardent prayers to God about the affairs of his people, mentioned in chap. 9., which was in the first year of Darius, from that very time HE (namely, the angel Gabriel) had strenuously co-operated with Michael, in working the deliverance of the Jewish nation.” While there may be an element of truth to Gabriel and Michael working together, that it not the point of this text. This, to me, is a foolish absurdity, for this very angel has declared that Michael helped him (Dan 10:13). To imagine that a subordinate angel supports and defends an angelic prince, or principality, calls for our thoughts to stretch beyond the line of spiritually sound thought.

The one advantaged by this angel was “Darius the Mede,” not Michael the prince. He is the one the angel stood up, or exercised an initiative, to support and protect. All of this does relate to the Jews, for they were the subject of Daniel’s prayers (9:19-20). They were also the subject of angelic revelation (9:24; 10:14).

From these considerations, together with the opposition of “the prince of Persia,” we conclude there was a Satanic initiative against the Jews. We do not know the extent of the knowledge of the “powers of darkness,” but they had apparently become aware of the imminent conclusion of the Babylonian captivity. That captivity ended in 536 B.C., twenty years before the Temple rebuilding was completed (516 B.C.). In the years that followed the first year of Darius, a number of initiatives against the Jews are recorded.

- 537 B.C. Daniel was thrown into lion’s den (Dan 6:1-28).
- 535 B.C. The Samaritans interfere with the rebuilding of the Temple (Ezra 4:1-5).
- 529 B.C. Letters of accusation against the Jews are sent to the Persian king Ahasuerus (Cyrus’ son Cambyses) (Ezra 4:6-16).
- 529 B.C. The command is given to stop the temple building project (Ezra 4:17-22).
- 528-521 B.C. The Temple project is suspended for seven years (Ezra 4:23-24).
- 521 B.C. Heathen governors send letters questioning whether the rebuilding of the Temple was really commanded by Cyrus (Ezra 5:5-17).
- 474 B.C. Haman initiates a plot to kill all the Jews in the realm (Esther 3:1-6).
- 474 B.C. Letters are sent throughout the realm “to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day” (Esther 3:12-15).
- 444 B.C. Sanballot, Tobiah, and Geshem ridicule Nehemiah’s plans to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall (Neh 2:19-20).
- 444 B.C. Sanballot becomes indignant at the building of the walls of the holy city, and spoke to his brethren and the army of Samaria against the work (Neh 4:1-2).
- 444 B.C. Tobiah joins in the mockery, saying a fox would be able to break down their stone wall (Neh 4:3).
- 444 B.C. A conspiracy is formed against the building of the wall, involving Sanballot, Tobiah, the Arabians, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, to fight against the builders (Neh 4:7-9).
- 444 B.C. Sanballot, Tobiah, and Geshem seek to draw the builders away from the wall into the plans of Ono (Neh 6:1-17).

These are only the recorded oppositions that followed “the first year of Darius.” They all occurred even though this angel had stood up to encourage and strengthen Darius. This indicates the vehemence of the opposition initiated by “the prince of Persia” against the Jews. All of these efforts were a reflection upon earth of an initiative launched by “spiritual; wickedness in high places,” and “the rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph 6:12).

The Angel Stood

This angel engaged in an initiative to fortify the reign of Darius, particularly regarding the Jews. The result of his action was extended favor toward the Jews, in order that they might be sustained, and not wiped out by the influence of “the prince of Persia.”

The Angel and the Will of God

It must be remembered that angels are dispatched from the throne of God. They do not operate on their own, but “do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word” (Psa 103:20). In the interest of His people, God had sent an angel to fortify Darius in his favor toward the Jews. That is why Daniel was elevated a place of political prominence (Dan 6:2). That is why Darius published a world-wide proclamation to “all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in the earth.” In this decree, Darius proclaimed “the God of Daniel,” saying “He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth” (Dan 6:16-27).

Here is an excellent example of one of the ways God fulfills these marvelous promises – Divine commitments to bless His people.

- “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry.” (Psa 34:15)
- “Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: He preserveth the souls of His saints; He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.” (Psa 97:10)
- “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.” (Psa 34:7)
- “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” (Rom 8:28)
- “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.” (Heb 13:6)

These texts, and more, show us the magnitude of what has been revealed in Christ Jesus: “Are they [the holy angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb 1:14). The ministration of these obedient spirits is not always directly to us. Sometimes, as in the text before us, they are sent to bolster those who are inclined toward us. Other times they are sent forth to subdue our enemies, as shown in the overthrow the hosts of Sennacherib (2 Kgs 19:35). Sometimes they lead us, as they did Israel through the wilderness Ex 32:34). Whether we are aware of them or not, these angels are working for the saints, ministering to the heirs of salvation.

An Observation

If God moved among men in favor of the fleshly seed of Abraham, how much more will He do so in regard for those who are in Christ Jesus, and are Jews inwardly, and whose circumcision is of the heart, and not the flesh (Rom 2:29)? Now, Jesus is governing the world with a regard to bring many sons to glory (Heb 2:10). He has been made the Head over all principality and power “for the church” (Eph 1:22-23). He shall “put down all principality and power,” and bring all of the children of God to glory, blameless and in joy (1 Cor 15:24; Jude 1:24-25).

I WILL SHOW THEE THE TRUTH

“2a And now will I show thee the truth.” Other versions read, “And now I will make clear to you what is true,” BBE and “Now then, I will reveal the truth to you.” NLT

SHOWING THE TRUTH

The angel had said he had come to tell him what was written in “the Scriptures of TRUTH,” and now he will do precisely that. He will not merely tell Daniel what is going to happen, but what has been determined by God, for that alone is “the truth.” The “truth” of which he speaks is the outward manifestation of the decrees of Almighty God. It is how Divine purpose is played out, as it was, among the sons of men.

The reason for the disclosure of these events is to assure Daniel that the government belongs to the Lord, and that He is at the helm of history, directing the affairs of men in the strict interest of His people. That is why the angel told Daniel, “Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days” (10:14).

To “show” the truth is to make it apparent to Daniel’s understanding, or make it clear to him.

This is necessary because the things God has decreed are not apparent to the sons of men. If He does not make them known, there is no possible way men can come to any understanding of them.

Thus it is written, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God ” (1 Cor 2:11). While this text has particular reference to the things God has “prepared for them that love Him” (2:9), the principle applies to anything God has determined. What God has purposed, whether it immediately relates to the Jews, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, or the governments of this world, is secret until God makes it known. Even when His determinations are wrought out among men, they are not able to confidently and insightfully relate them to the God of heaven until He makes that association through revelation. Until that time, His purposes are, as it was, sealed in the “Book of Truth.”

Loftier Thought

Here we are dealing with a loftier form of thought than is normal among those professing identity with God. There is an unfortunate tendency with the church to limit their thinking to the realm of obligation: i.e., what is the will of God for my life? Let it be clear, it is imperative that such things be known, and considerable has been revealed about what God expects of all men in general, and His people in particular. However, there are higher domains of thought than this – terrains that shed light on human duty, and enable us to fulfill those duties with joy and confidence.

These loftier realms have to do with Divine determinations – what the Lord has purposed. In summary, these things are God’s “eternal purpose,” particularly revealed in Jesus Christ. Now, the angel is going to reveal some of the details of that purpose, particular as they relate to the Jews. If this is considered to be irrelevant to salvation, let the words of our blessed Lord be remembered: “salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). The extent of this statement is made known through Paul: “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants , and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever . Amen.” (Rom 9:4-5).

THE TRUTH

If Jesus is, in fact, “the Truth” (John 14:6), and if He alone is able to unlock the mysteries of Divine intent (Rev 5:2-9), then no truth has ever been stated that is independent of Him . Every articulation of truth intersects with the Lamb of God and His great salvation. Because of this, truth always relates to the saints, whether it is spoken to Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, on Mount Sinai, or by an angel to Daniel. Although the relationship of truth to believers is not always clearly seen, yet the relationship does exist, making “all Scripture” profitable to us (2 Tim 3:16-17).

For this reason, we must take great care not to limit our perspective of Scripture to history, culture, customs, and the likes. Those will often be present in the Word of God, but they are always on the periphery, and never at the center. We may observe the outworking of Divine purpose in history, and do so with some profit. But ultimately our thoughts must be brought back to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. That is where we obtain proper focus.

THREE KINGS, AND THE FOURTH

“ 2b Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.”

Once again, the significance of the kingdoms of Persia and Greece are being made known.

- They were revealed in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the multi-metaled statue. Heaven revealed to Daniel that they would be destroyed with all other kingdoms, by the Kingdom of God (Dan 2:32-45).
- Again, these same two kingdoms were included in Daniel’s vision of the four beasts that rose out of the sea. In that instance, heaven made known to Daniel that each of them would be supplanted by another government (7:3-17). The glorified Christ was introduced at this time, together with the Divine determination to ultimately give the kingdom to the saints (7:9-10, 13-14, 18, 22, 25).
- In an even more focused revelation, the same kingdoms were the subject of Daniel’s vision of the ram and the he goat. In that vision, the ruthlessness with which Persian would be overthrown was accented (8:3-27). In this revelation, Daniel was told of the impact of these kingdoms upon the Jews (8:12-14,24). The Messiah Himself was also introduced (8:25).
- The same kingdoms were then the subject of exposition by a holy angel who revealed that a fierce battle in the high places accounted for the displacement of the Persian empire by that of Greece (10:12-13, 20-21). Once again, the Jewish people come into the picture (10:14, 21).
- Now, a heavenly messenger puts a spiritual magnifying glass on the same two kingdoms, showing in remarkable detail how Divine determinations will be worked out among the sons of men. Once again, Israel is an integral part of the message. The “glorious land” is mentioned (v 16, 41), together with the sanctuary and the daily sacrifice (v 31).

It should be apparent to us that the kingdoms of Persia and Greece played a significant role in the coming of Christ into the world. That role was a preparatory one, and not a central one. Yet, it was worthy of some elaboration, and thus the angel begins to open up how God worked things together for the good of His people.

YET, THREE KINGS IN PERSIA

“Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia . . . ” Other versions read, “three more kings will arise in Persia,” NKJV “three more kings are going to arise in Persia,” NASB and “three more kings will appear in Persia.” NIV

The point of the prophecy is not a strict chronology of all of the kings of Persia. Rather, the angel is accounting for the initiative of Greece against Persia, wherein that kingdom was cast down. In the high places, the shift of power was the result of a conflict between holy angels and the “prince of Persia” (10:20). Now the impact of that battle upon the earth will be opened up.

The time for which the angel is accounting begins with “the first year of Darius the Mede” (11:1). From that time, three more kings would arise before anything significant would happen within Divine purpose. That is, the kingdom of Persia would remain in power without any significant opposition. The three kings that followed are:

- Cyrus, who reigned alone after Darius the Mede. With Cyrus, special political favor was shown to the Jews. He is the king God used to initiate the rebuilding of the Temple (2 Chron 36:23).
- Artaxasta, or Artaxerxes, who was called Cambyses by the Greeks. This king is mentioned in Scripture by the name “Ahasuerus.” He is the one to whom accusations were written against the Jews. Those accusations eventually led to an edict that stopped the rebuilding of the Temple for seven years (Ezra 4:6-24). His significance is seen in his interface with the Jews.
- Ahasuerus, whom married Esther, and was called “Darius Hystaspis,” or “Darius son of Hystaspes.” He was also brought into Scriptural prominence because of the favor he showed toward the Jews (Esther 2-3).

Historically, there was another Persian king names Smerdis. This king was a usurper, who pretended to be the son of Cyrus the Great, who was murdered by his own brother, Cambyses. Of this usurper history says, “Smerdis . . . was later successfully impersonated by Gaumata, a Magian, who was able to seize the throne when Cambyses died in 522 BC. The usurper reigned for only eight months, however, before he was slain by Darius and other Persian nobles suspicious of his origin.” BRITANNICA 2003 He is omitted from the listing because of this circumstance.

Referring to their historical names, the three kings of reference are, therefore, Cyrus, Cambyses, and Darius son of Hystaspes. In Scripture they are known as Cyrus, Ahasuerus I, and Ahasuerus II. The success of their kingdoms is owing to angelic opposition to the “prince of Peresia,” who was set against the Jews. His purposes, however, were thwarted, and the Jews found favor during the reign of these three kings.

Some choose to reckon the time from the revelation itself, which took place in the “third year of Cyrus king of Persia” (10:1). If this view is taken, the three kings would include the usurper, and would thus be Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspis, also called Darius son of Hystaspes.

I do not consider this conflict to be significant, for the point is not the three kings, but the fourth one. In either method of reckoning, the fourth king would be the same.

THE FOURTH KING

“ . . . and the fourth shall be far richer than they all . . . ” Other versions read, “a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them,” NASB and “the fourth will have much greater wealth than all of them.” BBE

It is generally understood that Xerxes is “the fourth king.” The decline of the Persian empire began with this king, who was rash and filled with pride.

Far Richer

This fourth king – Xerxes – inherited the vast wealth of the Persian rulers before him. Concerning Cyrus alone, the Lord said, “And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel” (Isa 45:3). Cyrus’ son, Cambyses, increased that wealth. Of him “Universal History” records, “On his return from Thebes, in Egypt, he caused all the temples in that city to be pillaged and burned to the ground. But he saved from the flames gold to the amount of three hundred talents, and silver to the amount of two thousand and five hundred talents. He is also said to have carried away the famous circle of gold that encompassed the tomb of king Ozymandias, being three hundred and sixty-five cubits in circumference, on which were represented all the motions of the several constellations.” Universal History, iv. 140

Xerxes also inherited the vast wealth of his father Darius, who was renown for his taxation. Herotus says of his, “The sum of tribute under Darius was fourteen thousand five hundred and sixty talents. Besides this sum received from regular taxation, Herodotus enumerates a great amount of gold and silver, and other valuable things, which Darius was accustomed to receive annually from the Ethiopians, from the people of Colchis, from the Arabians, and from India.” BARNES

All this vast wealth was inherited by Xerxes, the son and successor of Darius, and the “fourth king” to which our text refers.

An Explanation

There were more than four kings in Persia. The following is a listing from history.

- Cyrus — 536
- Cambyses — 529
- Pseudo-Smerdis — 522
- Darius Hystaspis — 521
- Xerxes I. — 485
- Artaxerxes I. (Longimanus) — 464
- Xerxes II. — 425
- Sogdianus — 425
- Darius Nothus — 424
- Artaxerxes II. (Mnemon) — 405
- Artaxerxes III.. — 359
- Darius Codomannus — 336

The third is omitted by the angel because he was an imposter. The others are of no significance in the Divine economy, and thus are not mentioned. It is the manner of God's Word not to bother us with details relating to those who do not intersect with the purposes of God.

STIRRING UP ALL AGAINST GRECIA

“ . . . and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.” Other versions read, “as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece,” NASB and “When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece.” NIV

This is something for which Xerxes was especially noted – stirring up the empire against Greece. Remember, Daniel had been repeatedly told that the kingdom of Greece would replace the kingdom of Persia – no less than five times. Two of them have been by inference, declaring the sequence of kingdoms (2:39; 7:5-6). Three of them have specifically stated referred to Persia and Greece (8:3-7, 20-21; 10:20). Now we are being provided with some of the details related to that overthrow.

Britannica Encyclopedia says the following of this king. “born 519 BC, died 465, Persepolis. Old Persian Khshayarsha, byname Xerxes The Great Persian king (486–465 BC), the son and successor of Darius I. He is best known for his massive invasion of Greece from across the Hellespont (480 BC), a campaign marked by the battles of Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea. His ultimate defeat spelled the beginning of the decline of the Achaemenid Empire.” BRITANNICA 2003

Of his attack of the Grecian empire, Britannica reads as follows. “There has been much later speculation on the real causes for the expedition. They could not have been economic, because Greece was not important then. Perhaps it was only the manifestation of a royal absolutism: Xerxes, whose character was later distorted in Greek legend, was neither foolish nor overly optimistic; although sensible and intelligent, he was nevertheless, according to G. Glotz, ‘a sovereign by divine right, to whom opposition was as annoying as sacrilege . . . nervous in temperament, fallen from youthful fire into indolence, incited to make a war he didn't like. . . .’ At the head

of his armies, he left Sardis for the Hellespont and had two boat bridges placed across the strait. A storm destroyed them, and Xerxes had the sea whipped as punishment. With the bridges remade, for seven days he oversaw the crossing of the army—5,000,000 men according to Herodotus and 360,000 by modern estimate, supported by 700 to 800 ships. Their passage was facilitated by a massive engineering works: a channel was dug across the Isthmus of Actium so that the peaks of Mount Athos might be avoided. Nevertheless, the army's size was of no help, partly because of misinformation about the enemy terrain and partly because of the appearance of a national feeling in Greece. After a few successes (e.g., Thermopylae, mid-August 480 BC), Xerxes occupied Attica and pillaged Athens on September 21, but on September 29, at Salamis, a naval battle that he had initiated turned into a defeat. Without a fleet to bring supplies to the army, he had to retreat; he crossed over into Asia, leaving Mardonius in Thessaly. During an indecisive battle near Plataea, on Aug. 27, 479, Mardonius was killed, and his death obliged the army of occupation to withdraw. Hostilities continued for 13 years, but thenceforth Xerxes involved himself only slightly.”
BRITANNICA 2003

THE REAL CAUSE

That is the historical perspective. However, the sphere of causes is not found in history, or in the machinations of gifted and powerful leaders! The real cause originated with the Living God, and was recorded on the tables of Divine purpose hundreds of years before the events occurred. The overthrow of Persia did not originate upon earth, but was only reflected upon earth. The angel has already explained that the overthrow would occur in high places – the domain where spiritual powers struggle.

When the time appointed for the overthrow of Persia approached, Xerxes was stirred up against the Grecian realm. He may have imagined that the idea originated with him, but it did not. He was brought into the Divine agenda, all the while thinking the whole thing was a product of his own thinking. And, indeed, he did make plans and instituted initiatives against Greece. From the higher perspective, however, he fulfilled the inspired statement, “The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” (Prov 16:33). Other versions read, “A thing may be put to the decision of chance, but it comes about through the Lord,” BBE The rather vulgar NLT translation reads, “We may throw the dice, but the LORD determines how they fall.”

Daniel is writing around the year 537 B.C. Xerxes moved against the Grecians around 480 B.C. BRITANNICA 2003 The Persian empire began to erode from that time, finally being overthrown by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C., nearly one hundred and fifty years after Xerxes set his eyes upon Greece. Thus, Daniel is told of the coming of Xerxes and his ambitions against Greece at least fifty-seven years before they took place.

FEAR NOT!

All of this has an immediate bearing on this time. As I write this lesson (3/2003), a military initiative is taking place in Iraq, which was a province in ancient Persia, becoming known as Iraq in the seventh century. It is presently one of the world’s “leading oil producers.” BRITANNICA 2003 In the conflict that is shaping up, Israel also, plays a prominent part.

In my judgment, these events have been preceded by a great struggle in high places. A shift of

power is going to take place, much like that of in our text.

Without being drawn into premature conclusions, it is enough that the people of God be bold, and not allow themselves to be pulled into the vortex of fear. The Lord is still the Governor of the nations, and He is ruling to fulfill His purpose, and give the ultimate advantage to His people. If appearances seem to contract these things, we simply have not seen things properly.

Instead of being caught up in politics, let us engage principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places. This is the conflict into which we have been inducted by faith (Eph 6:12). Let us be diligent to so live as to obtain spiritual power in this conflict.

A MIGHTY KING SHALL STAND UP

“ 3 And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.”

Once again, the angel is covering the same material already revealed to Daniel – yet this is not mere redundancy. The introduction of the coming Messiah into the world required this explanation. The struggles put before us were not mere political activities. They were the efforts of Satan’s powers to thwart the coming of the “Seed” Abraham. Since the devil is not omniscient, and could not precisely trace the lineage of Jesus, he focused his attention upon the people of Israel. From his perspective, the Babylonian captivity was an effort to obliterate a nation. However, from heaven’s vantage point, it was the chastening of His people, designed to awaken them from their spiritual slumber and commitment to idols.

Now, working through “the prince of Persia,” the adversary is again seeking to overthrow the ancient people. And, indeed, from the standpoint of appearance, it may appear that things are going his way. But they are not. Remember, what is being revealed relates to Daniel’s people. An explanation is provided that will cause faith to flourish and confident hope to dominate.

A MIGHTY KING

“And a mighty king . . .”

This is another reference to Alexander the Great, through whom the Persian empire was brought to an end. Our text does not mean he would arise immediately after Xerxes. Rather, what Xerxes did in

coming against the Grecian Empire was requited or avenged by Alexander. The conflict started by Xerxes introduced friction between these empires. When Alexander arose, therefore, he was more prone to move against Persia.

Here, Alexander is called “a mighty king.” Earlier in Daniel he is referred to as a leopard with wings on its back, that moved swiftly across the world (7:6). He was also depicted as the notable horn between the eyes of a conquering he-goat (8:4-7). Now he is seen as “a mighty king.”

SHALL STAND UP

“ . . . shall stand up . . . ” Other versions read, “shall arise,” NKJV “will appear,” NIV and “come to power.” BBE

The idea here is that Alexander ultimately stood up against the kings of Persia. Remember, in the high places, a holy angel was joined by Michael the prince to fight against “the prince of Persia.” What we are here reading is the effect of that battle upon earth. When the spiritual principality called “the prince of Grecia” came into power (10:20), he worked through Alexander the Great to achieve the political overthrow of Persia, which had lost its dominion because the “prince of Persia” had been cast down. While history calls attention to Alexander himself, the angel has told Daniel of the spiritual power behind Alexander.

Alexander was “born in 356 BC at Pella in Macedonia, the son of Philip II and Olympias (daughter of King Neoptolemus of Epirus). From age 13 to 16 he was taught by Aristotle, who inspired him with an interest in philosophy, medicine, and scientific investigation; but he was later to advance beyond his teacher's narrow precept that non-Greeks should be treated as slaves.

“Left in charge of Macedonia in 340 B.C. during Philip's attack on Byzantium, Alexander defeated the Maedi, a Thracian people; two years later he commanded the left wing at the Battle of Chaeronea, in which Philip defeated the allied Greek states, and displayed personal courage in breaking the Sacred Band of Thebes. A year later Philip divorced Olympias; and, after a quarrel at a feast held to celebrate his father's new marriage, Alexander and his mother fled to Epirus, and Alexander later went to Illyria. Shortly afterward, father and son were reconciled and Alexander returned; but his position as heir was jeopardized.

In 336, however, on Philip's assassination, Alexander, acclaimed by the army, succeeded without opposition. He at once executed the princes of Lyncestis, alleged to be behind Philip's murder, along with all possible rivals and the whole of the faction opposed to him. He then marched south, recovered a wavering Thessaly, and at an assembly of the Greek League at Corinth was appointed generalissimo for the forthcoming invasion of Asia, already planned and initiated by Philip. Returning to Macedonia by way of Delphi (where the Pythian priestess acclaimed him “invincible”), he advanced into Thrace in spring 335 and, after forcing the Shipka Pass and crushing the Triballi, crossed the Danube to disperse the Getae; turning west, he then defeated and shattered a coalition of Illyrians who had invaded Macedonia. Meanwhile, a rumor of his death had precipitated a revolt of Theban democrats; other Greek states favored Thebes, and the Athenians, urged on by Demosthenes, voted help. In 14 days Alexander marched 240

miles from Pelion (near modern Korçë, Albania) in Illyria to Thebes. When the Thebans refused to surrender, he made an entry and razed their city to the ground, sparing only temples and Pindar's house; 6,000 were killed and all survivors sold into slavery. The other Greek states were cowed by this severity, and Alexander could afford to treat Athens leniently. Macedonian garrisons were left in Corinth, Chalcis, and the Cadmea (the citadel of Thebes).”
BRITANNICA 2003

The angel of God, declaring in advance that whole series of events simply said, “A mighty king shall stand up.” That is how heaven accounts for his sudden rise to prominence. He was not a “mighty king” by name only, but by accomplishment. In turn, that was true because the spiritual power behind Grecia came into prominence – and that was only because the spiritual power behind Persia had been overcome by holy angels. Had these two events not taken place – the casting down of the “prince of Persia,” and the coming into prominence of “the prince of Grecia” – Alexander would never have been “great.”

GREAT DOMINION

“ . . . that shall rule with great dominion . . . ” Other versions read, “he will rule with great authority,” NASB “he shall rule with great power,” DOUAY “and he shall be the lord of a great empire,” Septuagint “and govern a vast empire,” NJB and “will rule a vast kingdom.” NLT

Prior to this, it was said of the Grecian kingdom, “ and dominion was given to it ” (7:6). Again, it was said of Alexander that Grecia was like a one horned he-goat that “waxed very great” (8:8). Of Alexander himself it is said, “And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king ” (Dan 8:21).

Of the expansion of his dominion history says, “In winter 334–333 Alexander conquered western Asia Minor, subduing the hill tribes of Lycia and Pisidia; and in spring 333 he advanced along the coastal road to Perga, passing the cliffs of Mt. Climax . . . From Gordium he pushed on to Ancyra (modern Ankara) and thence south through Cappadocia and the Cilician Gates (modern Kulek BoHazi); a fever held him up for a time in Cilicia . . . Darius was astride his line of communications at Issus, north of Alexander's position (autumn 333). Turning, Alexander found Darius drawn up along the Pinarus River. In the battle that followed, Alexander won a decisive victory . . . From Issus Alexander marched south into Syria and Phoenicia, his object being to isolate the Persian fleet from its bases and so to destroy it as an effective fighting force . . . His conquest of Egypt had completed his control of the whole eastern Mediterranean coast . . . Alexander now occupied Babylon, city and province; Mazaeus, who surrendered it, was confirmed as satrap in conjunction with a Macedonian troop commander, and quite exceptionally was granted the right to coin. As in Egypt, the local priesthood was encouraged. Susa, the capital, also surrendered, releasing huge treasures amounting to 50,000 gold talents; here . . . In spring 330 Alexander marched north into Media and occupied its capital Ecbatana . . . In Aria he reduced Satibarzanes, who had offered submission only to revolt, and he founded Alexandria of the Arians (modern Her(t) . . . From Phrada, Alexander pressed on during the winter of 330–329 up the valley of the Helmand River, through Arachosia, and over the mountains past the site of modern Kabul into the country of the Paropamisadae, where he founded Alexandria by the Caucasus . . . Alexander, marching west to Bactra-Zariaspa (modern Balkh [Wazirabad] in Afghanistan), appointed loyal satraps in Bactria and Aria. Crossing the Oxus, he sent his general Ptolemy in pursuit of Bessus, who had meanwhile been overthrown by the Sogdian Spitamenes. . . From Maracanda (modern Samarkand) Alexander advanced by way of Cyropolis to the Jaxartes (modern Syrdarya), the boundary of the Persian Empire. There he broke the opposition of the Scythian nomads by his use of catapults and, after defeating them in a battle on the north bank of the river, pursued them into the interior. On the site of modern

Leninabad (Khojent) on the Jaxartes, he founded a city, Alexandria Eschate, “the farthest.” . . . It took Alexander until the autumn of 328 to crush the most determined opponent he encountered in his . . . In June Alexander fought his last great battle on the left bank of the Hydaspes. He founded two cities there, Alexandria Nicaea (to celebrate his victory) and Bucephala (named after his horse Bucephalus, which died there); and Porus became his ally . . . In the winter of 324 Alexander carried out a savage punitive expedition against the Cossaeans in the hills of Luristan.”

Of that impressive summation, the angelic messenger simply says, “a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion.” That is certainly not how an historian would say it. In fact, volumes have been written that simply state the exploits of Alexander without many embellishing comments. But the Holy Spirit wraps up the entire period of Alexander’s expanding kingdom with six words: “and shall rule with great dominion.” It is obvious, therefore, that Alexander’s rule was not the primary rule, and his kingdom was not the primary kingdom.

DO ACCORDING TO HIS WILL

“ . . . and do according to his will.” Other versions read, “and do as he pleases,” NASB “and take action as he pleases,” NRSV and “accomplish everything he sets out to do.” NLT

This kind of power is not said of many earthly potentates. It was said of Nebuchadnezzar: “And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down” (Dan 5:19).

Once again, this was not owing to any power on Alexander’s part. Rather, he was released to do his own will much like Satan was allowed to do his will in his assault against Job. He could not go beyond the boundaries determined by God. When his purpose had been fulfilled, he was simply removed.

HIS KINGDOM SHALL BE BROKEN AND DIVIDED

“ 4 And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.”

The angel continues to speak of Alexander the Great and the Grecian kingdom. If one wonders why there is such repetition, it must be remembered that for Daniel this was all in the future. Further,

he was living in the peak of Persian power. It no doubt was difficult to visualize that great empire being overthrown with seeming ease. Of course, it would not be an easy overthrow at all. Already an angel has flown to him from heaven, announcing that the battle to overthrow Persia had begun in the high places. It would be nearly two hundred years before that overthrow was accomplished. Only then could it be formalized upon the earth.

HIS KINGDOM SHALL BE BROKEN

“And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken . . .” Other versions read, “as soon as he has arisen , his kingdom shall be broken up,” NASB “ after he has appeared , his empire will be broken up,” NIV “ while still rising in power , his kingdom shall be broken,” NRSV and “and when he shall come to his height , his kingdom shall be broken.” DOUAY

This same truth was stated in the vision of the ram and the he-goat. There it was said of Alexander, “when he was strong, the great horn was broken ” (8:8), and “And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. Now that being broken ” (8:22a).

The exercise of Divine Sovereignty or power is seen here. At the zenith of his power, when all should have been going well for Alexander, he was brought down – “removed” by the God of heaven (Dan 2:21).

Here is how history records the breaking of Alexander’s kingdom, or the breaking of the “notable horn.” “Suddenly, in Babylon, while busy with plans to improve the irrigation of the Euphrates and to settle the coast of the Persian Gulf, Alexander was taken ill after a prolonged banquet and drinking bout; 10 days later, on June 13, 323, he died in his 33rd year; he had reigned for 12 years and eight months.” BRITANNICA 2003

But Alexander’s reign was not really cut short by a sudden illness. He was “broken off” by the God of heaven, having served his purpose. While he reigned, he did what he willed. In breaking him off, God did what He willed.

The Significance of His Reign

Alexander, the “notable horn” and “mighty king” helped to pave the way for the Gospel. An unprecedented degree of interplay between the nations came into existence with him. There was also the matter of commonality in language that he introduced. This allowed for the spreading of the Gospel. This is highlighted by history’s record of him. “His career led to the moving of the great centers of civilization eastward and initiated the new age of the Greek territorial monarchies; it spread Hellenism in a vast colonizing wave throughout the Middle East and created, if not politically at least economically and culturally, a single world stretching from Gibraltar to the Punjab, open to trade and social intercourse and with a considerable overlay of common civilization and the Greek koinAas a lingua franca. **It is not untrue to say that the Roman Empire, the spread of Christianity as a world religion, and the long centuries of Byzantium were all in some degree the fruits of Alexander's achievement .**” BRITANNICA 2003 Of course, this was the Lord’s doing, not Alexander’s, and

“it is marvelous in our eyes” (Psa 118:23).

DIVIDED TO THE FOUR WINDS

“ . . . and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled . . . ”

Following Alexander’s death, his kingdom did not pass to any designated heir, for he had no time to appoint anyone to take his place, as others rulers did. Therefore, the kingdom did not pass “to his posterity,” as with other kings. Nor, indeed, was the kingdom governed as it was during his solitary reign. It was not “according to his dominion which he ruled.” A different kind of government followed his death.

The kingdom was divided into four sections, with a different ruler over each one. From the earthly perspective, Seleucus took charge of Syria. Antigonus became the chief officer of Asia Minor. Cassander took the kingdom of Macedon for himself. Ptolemy took possession of Egypt. None of them ever attained to the political stature of Alexander – “nor according to the dominion which he ruled.” The kingdom did not maintain the same level of power it had when Alexander ruled. However, what really happened was that God “parceled out” NASB/NIV the kingdom to these four men, dividing it to whoever He desired. Thus, as Daniel had been told before, the kingdom was allowed to continue, but in a reduced state of power: i.e., “prolonged for a season and a time” (7:12).

This same division was seen in the depiction of Greece as a four-headed leopard (7:6). Exactly the same point is made in the vision of the ram and the he-goat. Following the breaking of the “notable horn,” it is written, “whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.” (8:22).

PLUCKED UP FOR OTHERS

“ . . . for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those.” The “those” of this verse refers to supposed posterity of Alexander. His kingdom was not taken from him to be kept in his family. Instead, God took it from him and gave it to four other men of his own choosing, without any choice being made by Alexander. See the Lord ruling “in the midst” of His enemies (Psa 110:2). The children of God have every reason to be confident and filled with hope! Their earthly circumstances may be troubling, but their future is secure in Christ, and the hand of the Lord is upon them.

Thus we again see the fulfillment of God’s Word: “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan 4:17). And again, “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan 4:25). And again, “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will” (Dan 4:32). As

the Psalmist well said, “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psa 75:6-7).

THE KING OF THE SOUTH

“ 5 And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.”

Here the angel leaves an emphasis of the Grecian empire as a whole, focusing on two parts of the Grecian empire – the kingdom of the South and the kingdom of the North. The directions “South” and “North” are in relation to, as it is frequently called, “the land of Israel” (1 Sam 13:18; 2 Kgs 5:2; Ezek 7:2; Matt 2:20). The kingdom to the North is Syria, and the kingdom to the South is Egypt. At the division of the kingdom, Seleucus ruled over of Syria, and Ptolemy had charge of Egypt. It is evident that the events associated with these kingdoms will impact more directly upon Israel, Daniel’s “people.”

I am going to take the liberty of providing the dynasties for these two kingdoms. You will see the Spirit only comments on the relevant ones.

THE PTOLEMIES (Egypt)

- 323 Ptolemy Soter, son of Ptolemy Lagus, governor of Egypt.
- 306 Ptolemy takes the title of king of Egypt.
- 284 Ptolemy Philadelphus. (It was under him that the Septuagint Testament was made.)
- 246 Ptolemy Euergetes.
- 221 Ptolemy Philopator.
- 204 Ptolemy Epiphanes.
- 180 Ptolemy Philometor.

THE SELEUCIDAE (Syria)

- 323 Seleucus Nicator, governor of Babylon.
- 312 Seleucus recovers Babylon, and the era of the Seleucidae begins.

- 280 Antiochus Soter.
261 Antiochus Theus.
246 Seleucus Callinicus.
226 Seleucus Ceraunus.
225 Antiochus the Great.
187 Seleucus Philopator.
175 Antiochus Epiphanes.
164 Antiochus Eupator, of whom the Romans assume the guardianship.

These two nations frequently warred with each other, seeking for dominion over the holy land, which was between them. Of them Matthew Henry writes, "Ptolemy, soon after he gained Egypt, invaded Judea, and took Jerusalem on a Sabbath, pretending a friendly visit. Seleucus also gave disturbance to Judea."

Although Alexander's kingdom was divided into four kingdoms, the angel now focuses on only two of them. They are singled out because "the glorious land" became a point of contention between them. Remember, the angel is speaking with Daniel about "what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days" (Dan 10:14).

THE KING OF THE SOUTH

" 5 And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes . . ." Other versions read, "Also the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes," NKJV and "along with one of his princes." NASB

The "king of the South" is Ptolemy, who ruled over Egypt Lybia, Cyrene, Ethiopia, Arabia, Phoenicia, Coelesyria, Cyprus, and several isles in the Aegean sea, and many cities in Greece. He was "strong" in that he expanded his kingdom.

The phrase "one of his princes" does not refer to one of Ptolemy's princes, but one of the princes that was under Alexander. This is Seleucus, who was "the king of the North," who is the subject of the next verse.

Some Observations

First, here were matters that would begin taking place at least 214 years after this message is

being delivered to Daniel. So far as Daniel's personal life is concerned, some might surmise they had no relevance to him. However, the angel is not viewing Daniel in that manner. Rather, Daniel is seen as a member of the offspring of Abraham, to whom the promises were made. What is more, he has demonstrated a fervent interest in the people of God, praying for them to be forgiven, and to again stand in the favor of God. This concern has brought him into fellowship with God, who also regarded these people as "the apple of His eye" (Deut 32:10; Lam 2:18; Zech 2:8). Therefore, the Lord is sharing the future He has determined for this people.

Second, the Lord is selective about the people whose future he discloses. Even though there were four Divinely imposed divisions of the Grecian empire, God now speaks of only two of them. It is as though He is moving Greece under a magnifying glass, and showing Daniel matters regarding only a segment of its domain, and two of its rulers.

Here again we see the matter of heavenly focus. If ever a person is going to learn from God, a deliverance from the mundane and from generalities must be experienced. These are sisters of distraction who lead many deluded souls into the realm of unprofitability and vulnerability. The more a person deals with the mundane, everyday routines, of life, the more spiritual power and insight is forfeited. The same ensues when one gets caught up in endless generalities that never yield refreshing insights.

STRONG WITH A GREAT DOMINION

“. . . and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion." Other versions read, "and he shall gain power over him," NKJV and "who gain ascendancy over him." NASB

This is Seleucus, who ruled over Macedonia, Greece, Thrace, Asia, Syria, Babylonia, Media, Susiana, Armenia, a part of Cappadocia, and Cilicia and all the eastern countries. These extended as far as India, from Taurus to the river Indus, and from Taurus to the Aegean sea. The remainder of this chapter will deal with these two kings and their successors.

It is my persuasion that the Lord is confirming to Daniel that He will remember His people in the future, after Daniel has been gathered unto His people.

Divine Rule

Over and over, God is affirming His rule over the affairs of men. He did it during the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and now Cyrus. It seems to me that this is a truth that is most difficult to grasp. In fact, only faith can take hold of it. Circumstance seems to contradict it. The kings of the earth are not afraid to lift themselves up against the people of God, having no fear of God before their eyes. To the carnal mind, this appears to indicate Divine abandonment, or a sign of a lack of God's

interest in the affairs of His people – particularly if they have been less than true and faithful.

The prevalence of this kind of thinking is revealed in the level of despair that exists among professed believers. Responses such as anger toward the Lord, doubt that He loves His people, and fear about the future reveal the need for confirming the Lord does, in fact, “care” for His people (1 Pet 5:7). Even when great atrocities break out against the people of God, those atrocities have been greatly subdued.

Heaven never allows Satan to do all that he desires to do. Even as this passage will confirm, the devices of the powers of darkness, particularly as reflected in political machinations, are held in check by the Living God.

IN THE END OF YEARS

“ 6 And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times.”

This is one of the unique passages of Scripture that deals with very practical political matters. They are so remarkably detailed, that some have been tempted to either discard them as meaningless, or transfer to them mystical explanations that better suit their own personal agendas. However, there is room for passages of this sort in our thinking.

An Example

Take, for example, the manner in which many approach the subjects of the end of the world, the coming of Christ, and other eschatological events. The amount of preaching and literature that majors on fearful governments and difficult times is remarkable. Multitudes of people have been taught in such a way as to make them more fearful of receiving “the mark of the beast” than of standing before the judgment seat of Christ. Others are more shaken by thoughts of a great tribulation than they are of being cast into the lack of fire. Still others quake at the idea of one world government, as though that is the ultimate curse.

This sort of thinking does not issue from faith, and ignores certain comforting affirmations of

Scripture.

- “The heavens do rule” (Dan 4:26)
- “For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations.” (Psa 22:28)
- “For God is the King of all the earth” (Psa 47:7)
- “Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.” (1 Chr 29:11)
- “Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and He that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish” (Isa 44:25)
- “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Cor 10:13)

Daniel has already heard of the oppression of his people. He has lived through the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar and the destruction of Jerusalem. He has witnessed his colleagues, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, being thrown into a furnace of fire. He himself has been cast into a den of lions. He has heard of a coming initiative against “the pleasant land” (8:9). He has heard of some of the “host of heaven” being cast down (8:10). He has been told of the daily sacrifice being taken away, the place of the sanctuary cast down, and truth being cast down to the ground (8:11-12).

None of these things has caused Daniel to be dominated by fear, or to pray for escape from what is coming. That simply is not how faith moves a person to respond to such revelations. Rather than running to hide, he has knelt to pray. He has given himself to prayer, contrition of heart, and fasting – asking the Lord to forgive His people and show them mercy.

God has not revealed these things to him to induce fear and trembling, or even to weight his heart down with sorrow. Rather, he is assuring Daniel of the uninterrupted care He has for His people. They may pass through fire and waster, but it will not mean their demise. As it is written, “For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end” (Jer 4:27). And again, “Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end with you” (Jer 5:18). And again, “For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished” (Jer 30:11).

What kind of reasoning has led professed believers to speak of coming calamities in such a way as to provoke fear, rash speech, and foolish conclusions? We do well to learn from this passage that such responses bring no glory to God, and they certainly bring no advantages to His people.

THE END OF YEARS

“And in the end of years . . .” Other versions read, “at the end of some years,” NKJV “after some years,” NASB “after the course of years ,” DARBY and “and after his years.” Septuagint

Note, the phrase does not say “in the end of THE years.” This is not referring to the end of time itself, but to the period of time marking the close of the two kingdoms under consideration – Syria and Egypt. This is referring to the kingdoms in general, and the final kings of them. Daniel has already been told the Grecian Empire will be supplanted by a greater kingdom. In Nebuchadnezzar’s vision, that overcoming kingdom was described as legs, and feet and toes of iron mixed with iron and clay (2:33). In the vision of the four beasts, the Persian dynasty would be replaced by a ruthless “fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns” (7:7).

The words before us refer to the closing days of the Persian empire, with a focus on the kingdoms of Egypt and Syria. Even in the closing days, they are under the strict superintendence of the mighty God. Even though they engage in a hearty effort to be united, they will not be able to lengthen their days.

JOINING THEMSELVES TOGETHER

“ . . . they shall join themselves together . . . ” Other versions read , “they shall join forces ,” NKJV “they will form an alliance ,” NASB “they will become allies ,” NIV “they shall join affinity ,” DARBY “they shall be in a league together,” DOUAY and “they shall conclude a treaty .” NJB

The two kings of reference are Ptolemy Philadelphus , king of Egypt, and successor to Ptolemy and Antiochus Theus , king of Syria and second successor of Seleucus . These two kings engaged in an effort to unite their kingdoms. The means through which this was sought is now a matter of historical record. The precision of the prophecy given to Daniel is so remarkably detailed that it startles the flesh. Yet, faith leaps for joy when the hand of God is seen in such things.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER OF THE SOUTH

“ . . . for the king's daughter of the south . . . ” Other versions read, “the daughter of the king of the South.” NKJV/NASB/NIV

The “daughter of the South” is the daughter of the king of Egypt, whom I have identified as Ptolemy Philadelphus , successor to Ptolemy. The shrewdness of the attempt to unite the two kingdoms will become very evident.

THE KING OF THE NORTH TO MAKE AN AGREEMENT

“shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement . . .” Other versions read, “to carry out a peaceful arrangement,” NASB “to make an alliance,” NIV and “to ratify the agreement.” NIV

The meaning of the text is not that she went to negotiate peace, like an emissary or envoy. History confirms that the king of Egypt gave his daughter to the king of Syria in an attempt to solidify an alliance between the two kingdoms.

“Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Arsinoe I of Egypt. She was married to the Seleucid ruler Antiochus II Theos, supplanting his first wife, Laodice, whose children she persuaded him to bar from the succession to the throne in favor of her own.” BRITANNICA 2003

The “alliance,” then was a matrimonial one, as was often practiced among ancient rulers. The compact was, according to history, was that Antiochus Theos should divorce his wife and half-sister Laodice, and disinherit her children, and bequeath the throne to any future child of Berenice, who would thus unite the empires of the Ptolemies and the Seleucidae. THE EXPOSITOR’S BIBLE

Jerome said of this passage, “this was Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus king of Egypt, who carried her to Pelusium, and from thence sailed with her to Seleucia in Syria; where he met with Antiochus king of Syria, to whom he gave her in marriage, with a vast dowry of gold and silver; hence

she was called]fernoforov ; and the marriage was celebrated with great solemnity” Ibid p 196 & Jerome in loc.

I share these various quotations to confirm the unanimity among Bible students concerning the meaning of this passage.

POWER NOT RETAINED , SHE SHALL BE GIVEN UP

The Power of the Arm

“ . . . but she shall not retain the power of the arm; Other versions read, “she shall not retain the power of her authority,” NKJV “she will not retain the position of her power,” NASB and “but she will, lose her influence over him.” NLT

That is, she was not able to unite the two kingdoms. She could not even keep her husband, for history confirms that the plan fell to the ground. “Laodice, however, persuaded Antiochus to come to Ephesus (in Asia Minor), where he died in 246, perhaps a victim of her intrigues. The former queen then ordered her partisans to kill Berenice and her children, who had taken refuge at Daphne, near Antioch, in Syria. Aroused by the murder, Ptolemy III Euergetes, Berenice's brother, launched a successful war (the Third Syrian War) against Laodice and her son, Seleucus II.” BRITANNICA 2003

“ . . . neither shall he stand, nor his arm, but she shall be given up . . .” The meaning here is that the offspring of Berenice and Antiochus did not succeed in being in the royal line, and his mother was slain as well. The whole plan failed miserably.

Utter Defeat

“ . . . and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times.”

Other versions read, “she will be given up, along with those who brought her in, and the one who sired her, as well as he who supported her in those times,” NASB and “In those days she will be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her.” NIV

Here there was an utter overthrow of those who had no heart for the people of God. Their alliance would bring no good to the Jews, to be sure, and thus it was thwarted – thoroughly and decisively. Berenice herself was “uprooted, with those who were the cause of her coming, and her son, and he who took her in those times.” BBE The entire faction perished, thus bringing an end to the shrewd plan. The purposes of the wicked are ultimately thrown down.

CONCLUSION

The historical precision of this prophecy is most remarkable in its details. Remember, these things actually took place in what is called the inter-testamental period – between Malachi and Matthew. This was a period of approximately four hundred years in which there was no known prophet, and no Scripture was written. Yet, even during that time of imposed Divine silence, there were Satanic initiatives against the people of God. Great struggles would take place in high places to eliminate the children of Abraham, but they would fail. God would still work in the behalf of His people.

Those who lived during the period of reference would have the book of Daniel to interpret what was taking place. This would fuel their faith, and enable them to anticipate the coming Messiah with confident expectation.

Faith in God is always justified, and those who believe will not be ashamed, disappointed, or confounded. When we behold disheartening things taking place, and the rise and fall of nations, we have every reason to trust the Lord. He still cares for His own. Let none of us be moved to fear because the things that may be coming upon the earth. God is “for” those who believe, and if He is for us, “who can be against us?” No set-back we endure will be decisive!

The Prophecy of Daniel

THE FUTURE IS UNFOLDED TO DANIEL, #2

Lesson # 33

INTRODUCTION

We are dealing with matters that some might view as “secular” – things pertaining to the heathen nations of the world. They might also be perceived as unrelated to the great salvation that is in Christ Jesus, and therefore to be passed over. Consequently, they may be considered unworthy of our attention – at least if we do not consider the following.

- That these are matters written in the “Scriptures of Truth,” kept in heaven.

- That God Himself has made these determinations, removing and raising up kings to fulfill His own will.
- That God has sent an angel to Daniel to make these things known.
- That the Holy Spirit moved Daniel to write this record.
- That these events have to do with the children of Israel, from whom the Savior of the world came.

These considerations, and more, make the text relevant to us. Nothing that God has determined can be viewed as optional information, or unrelated to “the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim 2:10).

OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING GENTILE NATIONS AND KINGS

Although this is not always taught explicitly, there is often an underlying assumption that God had nothing to do with the Gentile nations. Because He did not have a covenant with them, it is reasoned, He had no dealings with them. But this is not true. The very fact that He is the “Lord of kings” (Dan 2:47) should confirm that to us. How could He be the Lord of someone with whom He had no dealings? To be sure, God had no covenantal dealings with the kings of the earth, as He did with Israel. However, they were exposed to Him, and were accountable to Him. It will be of value to make a few remarks about this circumstance before proceeding further.

Exposed to the Lord

The kings and nations of the earth have been exposed to God numerous times. They have not been totally ignorant of His Person and manners.

- The nations were originally formed from the sons of Noah, who lived through the flood and knew of the Lord (Gen 10:1-32).
- The scattering of the peoples throughout the whole earth was the result of a curse from God at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9).
- The king of Sodom heard of the God of heaven from Abraham (Gen 14:21-22).
- The Philistine king Abimelech personally heard from God, and was exposed to His servant Abraham. In fact, he was healed after Abraham prayed for him (Gen 20:2-18).
- Isaac, known for his association with the God of heaven, flourished in the land of the Philistines, and

they were envious of him (Gen 26:1-16).

- The king of Egypt, and all the nation, were exposed to God through Joseph. During a fourteen-year period, he displayed unparalleled wisdom, and in the time of famine “all countries came into Egypt to Joseph to buy corn” (Gen 41:46-57).
- The nation of Egypt, a world-dominating power, was exposed to the God of the Hebrews for 430 years (Ex 3:18).
- The Amorites were exposed to the power of the Lord when they were overthrown by the Israelites en route to Canaan (Num 21:21-33).
- The Moabites, both the people and their king, knew of the God of the Hebrews, of their deliverance, and of their blessing (Num 22-24).
- People in Jericho heard how God had delivered Israel from Egypt (Josh 2:10).
- During the times of the Judges, several nations became painfully acquainted with the God of the Hebrews. These included Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia and his people (3:10), the Moabites (3:28), the Philistines (3:31), Sisera and the people from Harosheth with Jabon the king of Canaan (4:14-23), the Midianites (7:23-25; 8:22), and others.
- During the reign of David, the Lord “brought the fear of him upon all nations” (1 Chron 14:17).
- The nations of the world were exposed to the wisdom of Solomon, who surpassed them all in riches and wisdom (1 Kgs 10:23-24).
- Nebuchadnezzar issued a proclamation to “all people, nations, and languages,” declaring God, His greatness, His signs and wonders, His kingdom, and His dominion (Dan 4).
- Darius issued a proclamation to “all people, nations, and languages,” declaring “the God of Daniel.” He proclaimed He was living, steadfast, His kingdom could not be destroyed, and that His dominion was to the end. He announced He delivered and rescued, and worked signs and wonders in both heaven and earth (Dan 6:25-27).
- Cyrus announced throughout the Persian kingdom that “the Lord God of heaven” had charged him to build Him a house in Jerusalem (2 Chron 36:22-23).

In all of these cases, the heathen were exposed to God through His people, whether individuals prior to the First Covenant, or the nation of Israel.

The nations of the world, therefore, were not ignorant of God. They had been repeatedly and extensively exposed to His Person and His ways. Furthermore, they were accountable for properly responding to that knowledge.

Nations Are Accountable to God

No earthly dignitary or nation is free from accountability to God. This has been abundantly confirmed in Scripture. The following is only representative of judgments brought against those who had no official association or covenant with the God of heaven.

- The world of Noah's day, which had no written Law from Him, nor covenant with Him, was destroyed because violence covered the face of the earth (Gen 6).
- Judgment of the people at Babel for striving to make a name for themselves (Gen 11:6-8).
- The cities of Sodom of Gomorrah, whose conduct had become reprehensible to Him (Gen 19:23-25).
- The heathen king Abimelech held accountable for desiring Sarai, Abram's wife (Gen 20:3).
- The Egyptians, who had oppressed His people (Ex 7:4).
- The Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, immoral nations occupying Canaan, which He expelled from that country (Lev 18:25; Deut 7:1).
- Sennacherib king of Assyria, for oppressing His people (2 Kgs 19:35-37).
- The city of Nineveh, warned of impending judgment because of its wickedness, then later destroyed because of its return to the same (Jonah 1:2; Zeph 2:13).
- Edom, the descendants of Esau for their wickedness (Ezek 25:13-14).
- Tyre and Sidon, Phoenician cities, who were destroyed for their pride and insolence (Isa 28).
- Nebuchadnezzar for taking the credit for the glory of his kingdom (Dan 4:30-32).
- Belshazzar for defiling the vessels of the house of the Lord (Dan 5:23-30).
- Herod for marrying his brother's wife (Mark 6:18).

- Herod for accepting undue glory (Acts 12:22-23).

Thus we see that God has dealt with uncovenanted individuals, cities, kings, nations, and even the entire world, for iniquity. All of this confirms that God is “the Governor among the nations” (Psa 22:28). Accounts such as the one before us are to be treated with the utmost sobriety. It is revealing Divine manners that we are obliged to know and respect.

WHY IS THE FUTURE IMPORTANT?

There is a considerable amount of Christian teaching and emphasis that leaves one with the impression the future is not important. A “whatever-will-be-will-be” attitude is developed that rivets one to the present, with little regard for what is ahead. This is not good.

Throughout Scripture, people have been admonished to shape their lives in view of what was coming. This is a kingdom manner that permeates nearly all of the Spirit’s teaching.

- Following the revelation of God, Noah shaped his life in view of what was coming (Heb 11:7).
- Joseph gave commandment concerning his bones in view of what was coming (Heb 11:22).
- Faithful Israelites lived in view of the coming Messiah (Luke 2:38).
- Jesus gave instruction to His disciples concerning preparation for the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt 24:15-20).
- Men are to live in view of their coming death and judgment (Heb 9:27-28).
- The life of faith is lived while looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 1:10; Tit 2:12).
- Believers were told to live carefully in view of “perilous times” that were coming (2 Tim 3:1-5).
- Ministers of the Word were admonished to preach in view of a coming time when men would not endure sound doctrine (2 Tim 4:2).

Any religious thrust that throws fog upon the future, or accents the here and now, is dangerous, to say the least. I am persuaded that a good percentage of present day Christianity will wither when men seriously consider the universal appointments of death, the end of the world, the judgment day, and the return of Jesus.

From yet another perspective, the revelations given to Daniel would awaken hope within the hearts of faithful Israelites. Difficult days would, indeed, be experienced. Yet, the people would not be removed. God would ultimate bring down their oppressors, and would not make a full end of them.

In our time, after we have considered prophesied apostasies, wars and rumors of wars, tribulation, and natural and political disturbances, there is yet more to consider. Our minds must not come short of ultimate future things! Trials will end. The devil and his hosts will be cast into the lake of fire. The righteous will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. The Kingdom will be given to the saints of the most high God. Jesus will soon come, punishing the wicked and rewarding the righteous. Then we will sit with Him in His throne.

That is the kind of future that must occupy our minds. Daniel received a revelation of the future. It was not intended to crush him, but to bring hope. The future is in the hands of the Lord, and it is comforting to ponder it.

CONCLUDING INTRODUCTORY THOUGHTS

The message of the angel, therefore, is especially pertinent for at least three reasons.

- This relates to certain Divine preparations for the coming of the Messiah.
- In the account the interest of God in His people and His land is revealed.
- The intolerance of God for pride and iniquity are confirmed.

For these reasons, we must exercise ourselves not to take a strictly historical view of the text. While that view exists, it is not the primary one. We must aim at seeing God more clearly in the text.

A BRANCH OF HER ROOTS

“ 11:7 But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall

prevail.”

The angel continues to unveil matters relating to the northern kingdom of Syria and the southern kingdom of Egypt. These were divisions of the Grecian empire, once headed up by Alexander the Great, who was suddenly “broken off” at the zenith of his power. The unseen hand of God is involved in all of these events, controlling, raising up, and casting down.

Satan Was Plotting

From the perspective of the powers of darkness, Satan is plotting against the Jewish people, because he knows the Messiah will come through them. His effort is to thwart the entrance of the Seed of the women, whom, God announced would mortally bruise his head (Gen 3:15).

The devil had sought to raise the Persians against the Jews in the days of Darius and Cyrus. However, his efforts were cast down to the ground through the intervention of holy angels. One of them stood up to strengthen Darius, so that he favored the Jews. Cyrus also did the same in the first year of his reign, being used of God to rebuild the Temple.

Still seeking to overturn the purpose of God, Satan sought to consolidate the Syrian and Egyptian kingdoms by means of a marriage contract between Berenice, daughter of the king of the South, and the king of the North. The plan fell to the ground, Berenice was murdered, and the king of the North returned to his former wife.

It Was In the Scriptures of Truth

This is how it all worked out upon the earth, and historians have duly noted and recorded those events. However, the angel has told Daniel these things were written in “the Scriptures of Truth,” the book of Divine intent. They were not simply the outworking of human machinations. Nor, indeed, were they only the working of the wicked one.

Satan, who also works by design, had plotted a strategy in which he thought to stop the entrance of the One through whom God had announced his demise would come. But God had frustrated his purpose, bringing it to nought. This revelation was intended to comfort Daniel, assuring him that the people for whom he had been praying would not be forgotten by their God. That protection would involve significant activity among heathen nations, and the expressions of heathen kings as well.

BRANCH OF HER ROOTS

“But out of a branch of her roots . . .” Other versions read, “But one of the descendants of her line,” NASB “One from her family line.” NIV

Some Background Thoughts

The additional versions that are quoted (NASB and NIV) are interpretations of the text, and not strict translations. The words employed in the text are “branch” and “roots.” This is heaven’s manner of speaking about generations. The “root” is the progenitor of a generation, and a “branch” are offsprings of that generation. From the standpoint of nature, these are bloodlines. In the Spirit they represent sources of both good and evil.

Scriptures speak of the “root of Jesse” (Isa 11:10; Rom 15:12), and “the root of David” (Rev 5:5). Both of these texts refer to the Lord Jesus, who was the Source of both Jesse and David, as well as their Offspring. Thus He is called “the Root and the Offspring of David” (Rev 22:16). In this language Divine purpose is emphasized, not mere fleshly genealogy.

In describing the determined destruction of the wicked, Malachi speaks of the day of judgment as a day “that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch ” (Mal 4:1). That is, there will no longer be any generation of ungodly people.

There is such a thing as an ungodly generation – a body of people that are corrupt before God. Such a generation lived in the time of Noah. That is why God said He had seen Noah as “righteous before Me in this generation ” (Gen 7:1). Jesus spoke of such a generation in His day, referring to it as “this generation,” and having nothing good to say about it (Matt 11:16; 12:41,42; 23:46; Mk 8:12; Lk 11:50-51; 17:25). God also referred to a “generation of His wrath” (Jer 7:29).

There is also a “the generation of the upright” (Psa 112:2), “the generation of the righteous” (Psa 14:5), “the generation of them that seek Him” (Psa 24:6), and “the generation of Thy children” (Psa 73:15).

Jesus referred these two generations as “wheat” and “tares,” further identifying them as “children of the Kingdom,” and “children of the wicked one” (Matt 13:38). John called them “the children of God” and “the children of the devil ” (1 John 3:10). God spoke of these two generations in yet another way in His revelation to John on the Isle of Patmos. He spoke of the generation of the ungodly as “the vine of the earth” (Rev 14:18-19), and the righteous as “the harvest of the earth” (Rev 14:15-16).

Why Bring This Up?

A proper view of this text requires some understanding of this way of viewing people. While, in a sense, all are individuals, in yet another sense, they are part of something larger than themselves. In the verse before us, Berenice, like a rotten tree, had been cut down. It appeared as though that was the

end of any involvement of the southern kingdom of Egypt with the northern kingdom of Syria. However, that was not the case at all. Syria had not thwarted Egypt.

Although “the king’s daughter of the south” was cut down, a branch shot up in her place – a branch to take up her cause. Remember what was said of her: “but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times” (11:6). Everyone associated with the plan to unite the two kingdoms through the marriage of Berenice and Antiochus Theos perished as the plan was thrown down to the ground.

There must have been a fierce struggle taking place, involving “the prince of Grecia,” who no doubt sought to extend the influence of the Grecian empire. It was now (around 246 B.C.) in its waning state, and would eventually be overthrown by Rome toward the end of the fourth millennium. What was taking place upon the earth, in my judgment, reflected a fierce struggle for dominancy that was occurring in “high places.” From the devil’s point of view, it was all an effort to bring down the Jews, and thus thwart the entrance of the Messiah, who would crush his head.

The phrase “a branch of her roots” refers to some one from the same family – not someone who sprang from Berenice, or the daughter of the king of the South. This refers to another member of the family tree from which she herself came.

Thus the NIV reads, “One from her family line will arise.”

HIS ESTATE

“ . . . shall one stand up in his estate . . . ” Other versions read, “shall arise in his place,” NKJV and “will arise to take her place.” NIV

The meaning of the text is that one would arise from her family who would take up her cause – one who would avenge her. This proved to be none other than her own brother, Ptolemy Euergetes. History refers to him as Ptolemy III Euergetes, son of Ptolemy II (Berenice’s father), who was also known as Ptolemaeus Philadelphus. It is said of his son Ptolemy III Euergetes (Berenice’s brother), “Shortly after his accession and marriage, Ptolemy invaded Coele Syria, **to avenge the murder of his sister**, the widow of the Seleucid king Antiochus II.” BRITANNICA 2003

COME WITH AN ARMY

“ . . . which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail . . . ”

The kingdoms of this world are forceful, as depicted by the four beasts that rose from the sea. Babylon was overthrown by force. Persia was overthrown by force. Eventually, Greece will be overthrown by force. This is the manner in which the kingdoms of the world function.

Now, in our text two divisions of the Grecian empire engage in war, the southern kingdom of Egypt coming against the northern kingdom of Syria. Ptolemy III, Berenice's brother marched with a great army into the citadels of Syria and took it by storm.

Of this conquest, history records the following. "When Ptolemy II Philadelphus died in 246 BC, he left a prosperous kingdom to his successor, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246–222 BC). His reign saw a very successful campaign against the Seleucids in Syria, occasioned by the murder of Euergetes' sister, Berenice, who had been married to the Seleucid Antiochus II. To avenge Berenice, Euergetes marched into Syria, where he won a great victory." BRITANNICA 2003

Grollier's Encyclopedia says of him, "and his wars against the Seleucid kings of Syria extended Egyptian territories in the Near East." GROLLIERS 2002

The fulfillment of this prophecy by Ptolemy Euergetes is acknowledged by established students of Scripture, confirming that it is not merely an imaginative idea of concocted by men.

- "He entered Syria, and caused so great a terror that many fortified cities surrendered themselves to him. During this war he drew to himself many cities which seemed impregnable; whence it is not surprising to find the angel stating his arrival at the fortifications. Some translate it "*dwelling place*," but without reason, and thus injure the Prophet's meaning. He shall come unto the very fortification, meaning, he shall arrive in Syria, and shall possess many fortified cities." CALVIN
- "As Ptolemy Euergetes did. See above. He came out of Egypt as soon as he heard of these calamities, to defend her. And shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north His strongholds. In fact, he overran Syria and Cilicia, and extended his ravages to the Euphrates and the Tigris. Polybius (Hist. l. 5) says that he entered into the fortified cities of Syria, and took them. In the passage before us, the singular — "fortress" — is put for the plural. And shall deal against them Shall "act" against them. Literally, "shall do against them." And shall prevail Shall overcome, or subdue them. As seen above, he took possession of no small part of the kingdom of Syria. He was recalled home by a sedition in Egypt; and had it not been for this (Justin says), he would have made himself master of the whole kingdom of Seleucus." BARNES
- "Certainly Euergetes, brother of the murdered Berenice, advanced into Syria, and overran the whole country, captured Seleucia, the port of Antioch, then mastered Antioch itself, and advanced even beyond the Tigris, while Seleucus retired behind the Taurus Mountains." PULPIT COMMENTARY

The Reason for the Record

The invasion of Syria by this king took place around 240 B.C., around 297 years after Daniel receives this word (approximately 537 B.C.). There would be no prophet to provide a Divine perspective of what was happening at that time. Therefore, God makes Daniel the custodian of this knowledge concerning things written “in the Scriptures of Truth.”

All of this concerns the Jews, for the angel said, “Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days” (10:14). Daniel is not being provided a mere overview of coming events. These are matters that directly bear upon God’s care, chastening, and protection of His own people. This is a revelation of what was taking place behind the scenes – the struggles in high places that were designed to crush the Jews and inhibit the entrance of the promised Savior into the world. This is not a statement of history, but an interpretation of it. It is revealing how the Lord is sustaining His people, and how the purposes of the devil are being utterly frustrated.

The Patience of the Saints

Thus the word is fulfilled, “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints ” (Rev 13:10).

The latter phrase, “the patience and the faith of the saints,” contrasts the people of God with the kings and governments of this world. Whereas the rulers of this world engage in violence to maintain and extend their dominion, the saints will be GIVEN, or inherit, the kingdom. Even now, we have “received” the kingdom in a preliminary and first fruits sense (Heb 12:28). But the fulness of that kingdom will yet be possessed according to God’s own purpose. Thus it is written:

- “Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” (Dan 7:22)
- “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” (Dan 7:27).
- “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Mat 25:34)
- “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32)

Thus, while the kings of the earth battle for supremacy through wars and rumors of wars, the saints patiently wait for the time when they will “inherit all things” (Rev 21:7). God has already announced His intentions, and confirmed that they are sure and will be realized. That is why the saints can wait patiently, living by faith. They will ultimately “judge the world” and “angels,” sitting with Jesus in His throne, and reigning with Him (1 Cor 6:2-3; Rev 3:21; 2 Tim 2:12). Satan will be bruised under their feet (Rom 16:20), and they will “reign for ever and ever” (Rev 10:5). All of this is done without drawing an earthly sword or doing battle in the flesh.

CAPTIVES CARRIED INTO EGYPT

“ 8 And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north.”

The angel continues to elaborate on the exploits of the king who will touch the purpose of God over two hundred years in the future – Ptolemy III Euergetes. There are some very precise things said about this king in order that the working of God may be clearly perceived by believers living at that time.

THEIR GODS CAPTURED

“And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold . . .” Other versions read, “He will also seize their gods,” NIV and “He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods.” RSV

The word “princes” does not refer to political rulers, but to the images that represented the gods. Thus other versions translate the word “molten images,” ASV “metal images,” NASB “idols.” NRSV and “their statutes.” NJB The meaning is that the main idols, and all other images were taken away.

This is something no heathen nation could do to the Israelites – carry away their God. Once the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant. When the men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark of the Lord, “He smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter” (1 Sam 6:19). No such slaughter, or anything remotely like it, attended this event – when the king of the South carried the gods of the Syrians into Egypt.

History records this is precisely what Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes, did.

“He gained popularity at home by recapturing statues of Egyptian gods originally taken by the Persians . The decree promulgated at Canopus in the Delta on March 4, 238 BC, attests both this event and the many great benefactions conferred on Egyptian temples throughout the land. It was during Euergetes' reign, for instance, that the rebuilding of the great Temple of Horus at Idf (Apollinopolis Magna) was begun. ” BRITANNICA 2003

Jerome, a scholarly Christian from the fourth century, wrote: “Ptolemy took with him, on his return, forty thousand talents of silver, a vast number of precious vessels of gold, and images to the number of two thousand four hundred, among which were many of the Egyptian idols, which Cambyses, on his conquering Egypt, had carried into Persia. These Ptolemy restored to the temple to which they belonged, and by this much endeared himself to his people. It was on account of the service which he thus rendered to his country that he was called Euergetes, that is, the Benefactor.” — Prideaux,iii. 121.

That this is general knowledge is confirmed by the following quotation from the Pulpit Commentary. “Ptolemy Euergetes conquered all Syria and Mesopotamia to beyond the Tigris. From this we learn he carried off immense booty, and among the articles taken were images of their gods. And not only the gods of Syria, but the images of the Egyptian gods, which had been carried into Syria from Egypt by Cambyses, nearly three centuries before.” To this agree such notables as Matthew Henry, John Gill, John Calvin, Barnes, and F.W. Farrar.

The precision of the prophecy is most arresting to consider. Not only is the swift and decisive manner in which Ptolemy Euergetes invaded Syria detailed, but also the kind of booty he took from Syria back to Egypt. Not only is this a testimony to the inspiration of the book of Daniel, it also confirms the futility of gods that have been originated by man.

MORE YEARS THAN THE KING OF THE NORTH

“ . . . and he shall continue more years than the king of the north.” Some versions place a different light on the passage. “He on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years,” NASB and “For some years he will leave the king of the North alone.” NIV

In actuality, Ptolemy outlived Seleucus, king of Syria, by four or five years. Prideaux, iii. 122 Historically speaking, both views are correct: 1 the king of the South did outlive the king of the North. 2 He also refrained from further attacks against Syria.

RETURNING TO HIS OWN LAND

“ 9 So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land.”

Here, there is a significant difference in the various translations. The Authorized version says the king of the South will come into his kingdom, then return to his own land. Other versions read, “Also the king of the North shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land,” NKJV “Also the king of the North shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land,” NASB “Then the king of the North will invade the realm of the king of the South but will retreat to his own country,” NIV and “Later the king of the north will invade the realm of the king of the south but will soon return to his own land.” NLT

There is considerable dispute about this text among the translators. However, I do not believe the message of the prophecy justifies the notion that the king of the North attempted to invade the kingdom of the South. History does record that Seleucus made such an attempt. Justin says that Seleucus “fitted out a great fleet, which was destroyed by a violent storm; and after this he raised a great army to recover his dominion, but was defeated by Ptolemy, and fled in great terror and trembling to Antioch.” Ut supra, (Justin, l. 27.) c. 2

Further, the verses that follow do not, in my judgment, blend well with the view that the king of the North entered the kingdom of the South, then returned to his own land frustrated. I see this verse as saying the king of the South moved about at will, without any significant resistance being encountered – either in into the kingdom of the North, and returning to his own kingdom. This is, then, a summation of what Ptolemy III Euergetes did. He entered the kingdom of the North, then returned without incident to his own land. Other translations also reflect this meaning. “And the king of the south shall enter into the kingdom, and shall return to his own land,” DOUAY “So the King of ye South shall come into his kingdome, and shall returne into his owne land,” GENEVA “So the king of the south shall come into {his} kingdom, and shall return into his own land,” WEBSTER and “And the king of the south hath come into the kingdom, and turned back unto his own land.” YLT

A BRIEF REVIEW

It will be profitable to once again state the remarkable details of this prophecy. In this, I emphasize that the point of the angel’s message is not to cause us to reel to and fro in wonderment. Rather, it was to assure the people of God living at that time that all was well, and the eye of the Lord was still upon His people. Succeeding generations would also be assured that God does not abandon His own people, nor do the governments of this world operate without Divine restraints or compulsions. God IS imminent in the affairs of men, else He could not fully protect the saints.

1. A relative of Berenice would rise to avenge her.
2. He would come with a great army.
3. He would enter the fortress, or citadel of power, of the king of the North.

4. He would prevail against that kingdom.
5. He would carry the gods and their idols back to Egypt.
6. He would carry back a large cache of silver and gold.
7. He would outlive the king of the North.
8. He would return peacefully to his own land.

All of this was meticulously fulfilled in the exploits of Ptolemy III Euergetes, king of the South (Egypt), against Seleucus Callinicus, king of the North (Syria).

Through the Prophets, God speaks of His holy predictions, challenging any other gods to speak in such a precise and effective manner.

- “I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it” (Isa 46:9-11).
- And again He says, “And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them” (Isa 44:7).
- Once again, “Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside Me” (Isa 45:21).

No other god speaks in such a manner. In fact, the Lord challenges all false gods: “Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together” (Isa 41:22-23).

When we keep these things in mind, certain Divine commitments obtain great strength. For example, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” NASB (Rom 8:28).

We know the things that have been recounted in this passage involve the working of God, for they were written in “the Scripture of Truth” (10:21). The word “Scripture” comes from a word that means writing, record, register, or book. These are not historical writings, or writings of history, but a record of “truth.” That does not simply mean these things would really happen, but that God was involved in them, for in Scripture, nothing is ever called “truth” that is unrelated to the Living God. God does not occupy our minds with incidentals.

PERPETUAL WAR

“ 10 But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress.”

The angel now reveals a third war. The previous two were as follows.

- The expedition of Xerxes against the kingdom of Greece, which began the final demise of Persia (11:3-4).
- The initiative of Ptolemy Euergetes, the third king of Egypt, who carried on a war of revenge against Seleucus Callinicus (11:7-9)

There are at least two things to keep in mind at this point.

- First, these are the outworking of conflicts in high places. There were principalities and powers, operating under Satan, the “prince of the power of the air,” who were seeking to overthrow the people and purpose of God.
- Second, the purpose of God was being meticulously carried out in what appeared to be a chaotic political arena.

If we do not keep these things in mind, we will lose our way in navigating through this passage.

Effort must be expended not to be unduly distracted by the historic fulfillment of this text. Daniel has prayed for the people of God, and the angel has informed him the events he is revealing bear directly upon those people.

STIRRED UP

“ 10 But his sons shall be stirred up . . . ” Other versions read “However his sons shall stir up strife,” NKJV “His sons will prepare for war,” NIV “His sons shall wage war,” NRSV “his sons shall be provoked.” DOUAY

These are the sons of the king of the North, Seleucus Callinicus, over whom the king of the South had triumphed. We know this is the case because of verse eleven, that speaks of the king of South rising up against one of these sons. The two sons in question were Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great, who continued the war between Syria and Egypt. They attempted to recover Syria, which had previously been miserably defeated.

First

By saying they were “stirred up,” at least four things are intended. First, they were moved by anger. Frequently a point is made of this in Daniel – that anger and ferocity play significant roles in the activity of nations.

- The fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar’s image is described in these words. “And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise” (2:40).
- The first beast of Daniel’s vision was “like a lion” (7:4).
- The second beast was “like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh” (7:5).
- The fourth beast was “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it: and it had ten horns” (7:7). It would “devour the whole earth, tread it down, and break it in pieces” (7:23).
- The “little horn” sprouting from the ten-horned head of the fourth beast, “made war with the saints, and prevailed against them” (7:21).
- The “he goat” (Grecia) with a “notable horn” was moved with “choler,” or rage, against the ram (Persia, 8:7).

- Another horn, coming from among the four divisions of Greece, would become great, throwing down the people of God, causing the daily sacrifice to cease, and plundering the sanctuary of God (8:10-13).

Thus there have been numerous incidents of stirring up – provocations, and angry initiatives waged in the name of governments. Like it or not, the governments of this world are like a seething pot, about to boil over at any moment. Were it not for “the great King over all the earth” (Psa 47:2), God’s people would have long ago been eradicated from the face of the earth. They are peaceable like lambs and doves, and the kingdoms of this world are like devouring lions and charging he goats.

Second

That brings us to the second thing that is intended in these account. God was in all of these matters. Ultimately, “no weapon that is formed” against the people of God will “prosper” (Isa 54:17). It may appear at times as though the purposes of God are being dashed to the ground, and the saints of the most High God put at a decided disadvantage. Yet, God is still ruling “in the midst” of His enemies (Psa 110:2).

Ultimately, it is God who “stirs up” these nations. The Lord “stirred up” adversaries against Solomon (1 Kgs 11:14). He also “stirred up another adversary” against Solomon (1 Kgs 11:23). He “stirred up” the spirit of the Philistines against Jehoram (2 Chron 21:16).

Take the text before us as an example. The kingdoms of the North and the South are identified by Israel. One is to the North of that small piece of Divine realty, and the other to the South. It is as though Israel was sandwiched between two warring parties – and neither of the parties have any regard for Israel. Yet, God regards the people, and that effectively offsets any evil intentions against them. The Divine affirmation is ever true: “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them” (Psa 34:7).

Third

To confirm His care to His people. All Scripture has been written with the people of God in mind, whether Daniel, those in the Intertestamental period, or you. The events that had to do with the ancient people of Israel “happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor 10:11). They reveal how God rules in the behalf of His people, chastening, delivering, and protecting them.

Fourth

More particularly, the Seed of the woman, and the Seed of Abraham will enter into the world in

“the fulness of the time,” even though the hosts of darkness are creating an environment that appears to forbid such an entrance (Gal 4:4). The hostile surroundings created by wars and rumors of war will not postpone or set back the appointed entry of the Son of God – not even for one fleeting moment!

A GREAT ARMY ASSEMBLED

“ . . . and shall assemble a multitude of great forces . . . ” Other versions read, “assemble a great army,” NIV “get together an army of great forces,” BBE and “mustering a host of powerful forces.” NJB

The two sons assembled a great army to go against Egypt, continuing the conflict initiated when their father reigned. Ptolemy III Euergetes had avenged his sister against their father. Now they would attempt to execute revenge on Egypt for what they had done.

While both sons assembled a multitude of forces, it was the youngest, Antiochus the Great, that actually initiated the war. He is the one that is mentioned in the following verses. Of this, history records the following.

“The fact was, that the war was prosecuted by Antiochus the Great alone. Seleucus died in the third year of his reign, in Phrygia; being slain, according to one report (Jerome), through the treachery of Nicanor and Apaturius, or, according to another, was poisoned.” See Prideaux, iii. 137

Again, I am careful to draw your attention to the nature of these rulers, and how radically they differ from the manner in which the kingdom of God is governed. The significance of this is found in the superiority of the heavenly kingdom. At each and every point it conflicts with the kingdoms of this world, they are, without exception, decimated.

We may expect, therefore, that each of these powerful kingdoms will fall to the ground, for eventually, they will come against God and His people. This is precisely what was revealed in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great statute. That dream dealt with the inferiority of earthly kingdoms. The principles revealed there apply to all kingdoms of the world. As it is written, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan 2:44).

This is most relevant, for the kingdom we are now considering is Greece prior to its demise. The kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, now set against one another, are divisions of Greece that followed the death of Alexander the Great. What, therefore, we are witnessing, is the determined means by which the kingdom would deteriorate and ultimately fall to Rome – division. “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand” (Mat 12:25) – even if it is mighty Greece!

OVERWHELMING

“ . . . and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through . . . ” Other versions read, “and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through,” NASB and “which will sweep on like an irresistible flood.” NIV

The picture is of a flash flood, that sweeps with devastating force across the land. The land through which he swept was not Egypt, but throughout every part of Syria. It was at this time that he also invaded Palestine (as referenced in the Britannica quotation that follows). This is, therefore, part of what was to “befall” Daniel’s people. This is precisely how Antiochus the Great is described.

“The son of Seleucus II, Antiochus succeeded his brother Seleucus III as king. He retained from the previous administration Hermias as chief minister, Achaeus as governor of Asia Minor, and Molon and his brother Alexander as governors of the eastern provinces, Media and Persis. In the following year, when Molon rebelled and assumed the title of king, Antiochus abandoned a campaign against Egypt for the conquest of **southern Syria** , on the advice of Hermias, and marched against Molon, defeating him in 220 BC on the far bank of the Tigris and also conquering Atropatene, the northwestern part of Media.” BRITANNICA 2003

Now, the angel informs Daniel that the mind of this king will again be turned toward Egypt, taking up the battle he temporarily abandoned in order to more thoroughly bring Syria under his full dominion.

STIRRED UP AGAIN

“ . . . then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress.” Other versions read, “that he may again wage war up to his very fortress,” NASB “and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress,” NRSV “and he will again take the war even to his strong place,” BBE and “and march on the southern stronghold once again.” NJB

In the beginning, this king had abandoned his initiative against Egypt, having met with significant resistance, and also desiring to further subjugate Syria. History says of that defeat, “Antiochus with an army of sixty-two thousand foot, six thousand horse, and one hundred and two elephants. In a great battle, Antiochus was defeated, and returned to Antioch.” Prideaux, Con. iii. 151-153

From heaven’s point of view, the time was not yet right. Now, however, he is stirred to again go up against the fortress of Egypt. This is the working of the Lord. History records the following that fulfilled this word.

Antiochus was now free to conduct what has been called the Fourth Syrian War (219–216), during which he gained control of the important eastern Mediterranean sea ports of Seleucia-in-Pieria, Tyre, and Ptolemais. In 218 he held Coele Syria (Lebanon), **PALESTINE**, and Phoenicia. In 217 he engaged an army (numbering 75,000) of Ptolemy IV Philopator, a pharaoh of the Hellenistic dynasty ruling Egypt, at Raphia, the southernmost city in Syria. His own troops numbered 68,000. Though he succeeded in routing the left wing of the Egyptian army, his phalanx (heavily armed infantry in close ranks) in the centre was defeated by a newly formed Egyptian phalanx. In the subsequent peace settlement, Antiochus gave up all his conquests except the city of Seleucia-in-Pieria.

After the Syrian war, he proceeded against the rebel Achaeus. In alliance with Attalus I of Pergamum, Antiochus captured Achaeus in 213 in his capital, Sardis, and had him executed in a barbaric manner. After the pacification of Asia Minor he entered upon his later to be famous eastward campaign (212–205), pressing forward as far as India. In 212 he gave his sister Antiochis in marriage to King Xerxes of Armenia, who acknowledged his suzerainty and paid him tribute. He occupied Hecatompylos (southeast of the Caspian Sea), the capital of the Parthian king Arsaces III, and forced him to enter into an alliance in 209 and the following year defeated Euthydemus of Bactria, though he allowed him to continue to rule and retain his royal title. In 206 he marched across the Hindu Kush into the Kabul Valley and renewed a friendship with the Indian king Sophagasenos.

Returning westward via the Iranian provinces of Arachosia, Drangiana, and Carmania, he arrived in Persis in 205 and received tribute of 500 talents of silver from the citizens of Gerra, a mercantile state on the east coast of the Persian Gulf. Having established a magnificent system of vassal states in the East, Antiochus now adopted the ancient Achaemenid title of “great king,” and the Greeks, comparing him to Alexander the Great, surnamed him also “the Great.”

After the death of Ptolemy IV, Antiochus concluded a secret treaty with Philip V, ruler of the Hellenistic kingdom of Macedonia, in which the two plotted the division of the Ptolemaic empire outside Egypt. Antiochus' share was to be southern Syria, Lycia, Cilicia, and Cyprus; Philip was to have western Asia Minor and the Cyclades. Antiochus invaded Coele Syria, defeated the Ptolemaic general Scopas at Panion near the source of the Jordan River in the year 200, **GAINED CONTROL OF PALESTINE AND GRANTED SPECIAL RIGHTS TO THE JEWISH TEMPLE STATE**. But Philip, marching along the Dardanelles, became involved in a war with Rhodes and Pergamum, both of whom appealed to Rome for help against Macedonia, informing Rome of the alliance between the two Hellenistic kings. Rome intervened decisively in the system of Hellenistic states. Philip was defeated by the Romans in the Second Macedonian War (200–196), and Antiochus refused to help him. Instead, taking advantage of the Romans' involvement with Philip, Antiochus marched against Egypt. Though the Romans had sent ambassadors to Ptolemy V, they could not lend him any serious assistance. When peace was concluded in 195, Antiochus came permanently into possession of southern Syria—which had been fought over for 100 years by the Ptolemies and Seleucids—and of the Egyptian territories in Asia Minor. He also gave his daughter Cleopatra in marriage to Ptolemy V. Egypt practically became a Seleucid protectorate.

In his insatiable expansionist drive, Antiochus occupied parts of the kingdom of Pergamum in 198 and in 197 Greek cities in Asia Minor. In 196 BC he crossed the Hellespont into Thrace, where he claimed sovereignty over territory that had been won by Seleucus I in the year 281 BC.

If these two warring kingdoms would have united, conditions would have become intolerable for the tiny nation of Israel that was between them. However, Daniel is being assured that even though trying circumstances “befall thy people in the latter days” (10:14), yet the will of the Lord will not be overturned. It is still true, “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men” (4:17,25,32).

GOD HAS NOT GIVEN US THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

It is essential that we emphasize these texts are not intended to generate fear in the people of God. That includes you as well as Daniel in his old age. In Christ we are told, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim 1:7). God does not work in contradiction of this declaration by revealing things designed to cause fear. Yet, much of what is being taught about the book of Daniel in these days is conducive to fear. The specific purpose of this revelation to Daniel is to confirm that whatever befalls the Jews, the purpose of God will not be overturned. Nor, indeed, will His promises be voided, or His people forgotten. God is faithful, and His gifts and calling are without repentance (1 Cor 1:9; Rom 11:29).

It is imperative that this point register on our hearts – for if this was true of those under the Old Covenant, much more is it true of those who are under the New Covenant, which is a “better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb 8:6). No child of God can afford to allow events on the earth to unsettle their spirits.

THE MULTITUDE GIVEN INTO HIS HAND

“ 11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand.”

The king of the South is Ptolemy Philopator, who succeeded Ptolemy Euergetes in Egypt. This king was noted for being weak and vacillating, not easily moved to engage in military exploits. However, in spite of his natural temperament, he was provoked by the military initiatives of Antiochus the Great , and was moved to fight against him. History records the following fulfillment of the events now revealed.

“Macedonian king of Egypt (reigned 221–205 BC), under whose feeble rule, heavily influenced by favourites, much of Ptolemaic Syria was lost and native uprisings began to disturb the internal stability of Egypt.

Classical writers depict Ptolemy as a drunken, debauched reveller, completely under the influence of his disreputable associates, among whom Sosibius was the most prominent. At their instigation, Ptolemy arranged the murder of his mother, uncle, and brother.

Following the defection of one of Ptolemy's best commanders, Egypt's Syro-Palestinian territory, Coele Syria, was seriously threatened by Antiochus III, the Syrian Seleucid ruler. In 219, when the Seleucid ruler captured some of the coastal cities, Sosibius and the Ptolemaic court entered into delaying negotiations with the enemy, while the Ptolemaic army was reorganized and intensively drilled. So grave was the threat that **for the first time under the Ptolemaic regime native Egyptians were enrolled into the infantry and cavalry and trained in phalanx tactics** . In 218 the negotiations collapsed, and Antiochus renewed his advance, overrunning Ptolemy's forward defenses. In the spring of 217, **however, Ptolemy's new army met the Seleucid forces near Raphia in southern Palestine, and with the help of the Egyptian phalanx Ptolemy was victorious.** Although holding the initiative, the Egyptian king, on Sosibius' advice, negotiated a peace, and the Seleucid army withdrew from Coele Syria.” BRITANNICA 2003

That is how history records what took place. Now we will hear what was written in “the Scripture of Truth” concerning those events.

MOVED WITH CHOLER

“ 11 And the king of the south shall be moved with choler . . . ” Other versions read, “And the king of the South shall be moved with rage,” NKJV “will be enraged,” NASB “will march our in rage,” NIV “Moved with rage,” NRSV “being provoked,” DOUAY and “doth become embittered.” YLT

I want to emphasize how this response went against the very nature of the “king of the South.” This was not his manner. Both parts of Syria and Palestine had previously been under the control of the South. Now Ptolemy Philopator seeks to take them back. Again, the Jews are, as it were, caught in the middle of these warring remnants of the Grecian empire. Here again we see the Lord raising up and putting down kings and kingdoms.

HE WILL FIGHT WITH THE KING OF THE NORTH

“ . . . and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north . . . ” Other versions read, “do battle against the king of the North,” NRSV “will come out and make war on him, on this same king of the north,” BBE “set out to give battle to the king of the north,” NJB and “will rally against the vast forces assembled by the king of the north.” NLT

From a military point of view, this did not appear to be a wise course of action. However, this is an exhibition of the government of God, not the governments of men.

Egypt and Syria, once part of a single empire, are now, for the fourth time, engaged in a fierce conflict with one another . Let it be clear, these inner conflicts are evidences that the end of the Grecian empire is fast approaching. In the beginning, when this empire came into prominence, Daniel saw it depicted as a four-headed winged leopard. Of that beastly empire it was said, “dominion was GIVEN unto it” (7:6). When inner turmoil began to fester within this empire, Daniel was told it was “in the latter time of their kingdom.” Other versions read, “latter period of their rule,” NASB and “at the end of

their rule” NRSV (8:21).

An Application

As arresting as it is to consider, the entrance of division and warring factions is generally the prelude to demise. That is precisely why no religious reformation movement has ever been truly successful. It is no wonder that believers are solemnly admonished, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor 1:10). There is no hope of surviving division! It must be brought to an end, or it will bring an end to the people.

THE MULTITUDE GIVEN TO THEIR ENEMY

“ . . . and he shall set forth a great multitude . . . ” Other versions read, “the king of the North, who shall muster a great multitude,” NKJV “the king of the North, who will raise a large army,” NIV “this same king of the north . . . will get together a great army,” BBE and “the king of the north, who will have an immense army on his side.” NJB

Actually, the armies were fairly evenly matched. Of the two groups Polybius (who wrote an extensive history of Rome covering 220-168 B.C.) Wrote the following: “This army of Ptolemy [king of the South] . . . was led through Arabia Petraea, and consisted of seventy thousand infantry, and five thousand cavalry, and seventy-three elephants. The army of Antiochus [king of the North] consisted of sixty two thousand foot, six thousand horse, and a hundred and two elephants.” — Polybius, chapter 86, Prideaux, Con. iii. 151

This battle, however, will not be decided by military strategy. Remember, this is a commentary on Divine rule, not the manipulations and initiatives of the kings of the earth. The telling explanation of the battle’s outcome is revealed to Daniel over two hundred years before it takes place.

“ . . . but the multitude shall be given into his hand.” Other versions read, “but the multitude shall be given into the hand of his (the king of the North’s) enemy (the king of the South) ” NKJV “but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former,” NASB “but the army will be given into his hand,” BBE “but the multitude shall be delivered into his hand,” Septuagint “but the multitude will be delivered into his foe's power,” TNK and “and the multitude hath been given into his hand.” YLT

Different Translations

Some versions of the Scripture omit this perspective, speaking of defeat as though it was the result of military strategy and the superiority of armed forces. “who will raise a large army, but it will be defeated,” NIV “who shall muster a great multitude, which shall, however, be defeated by his enemy,” NRSV “who will have an immense army on his side, but this army will be defeated by him,” NJB and “will rally against the vast force assembled by the king of the north and will defeat them.” NLT

An Erroneous Representation

These translations are supposedly based upon varied original texts and, in my judgment, are wholly unjustified.

- First, if they are correct, they have an angel from heaven representing military superiority as being recorded in “the Scripture of Truth.”
- Second, they conveniently ignore the very point that is repeatedly affirmed in the book of Daniel, namely that the Lord God is governing the nations (2:21; 4:17,25,32,35; 5:21).
- Third, there is a spirit in Scripture as well as words, “For the kingdom of God does not consist in words, but in power” NASB (1 Cor 4:20).
- Fourth, it would contribute to the imagination that what befalls those upon whom Divine favor has rested, is determined and controlled by men, not by God. This is in flagrant contradiction of revealed truth (1 Cor 10:13).

God Gave Them Into His Hand

History says of this event, “Ten thousand of the army of Antiochus were slain, four thousand taken prisoners, and with the remainder of his forces Antiochus entreated to Antioch.” Prideaux, iii. 152, 153

Again secular history records, “In the spring of 217, however, Ptolemy's new army met the Seleucid forces near Raphia in southern Palestine, and with the help of the Egyptian phalanx Ptolemy was victorious.” BRITANNICA 2003

The angel who is speaking with Daniel is not giving a mere report of what will take place, but is announcing what has been determined by God, or is recorded in “the Scripture of Truth.” God has already established to Daniel by means of signs and wonders, as well as affirmation, that He, and He alone, rules in the kingdoms of men., It is His will that is being done among the inhabitants of earth as well as the armies of heaven (Dan 4:35).

There are many Scriptural expressions that confirm this is a precise reflection of the truth.

- “When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy GOD HATH DELIVERED THEM into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive” (Deu 21:10)

- “And the LORD said unto Joshua, Fear them not: for I HAVE DELIVERED THEM INTO THY HAND; there shall not a man of them stand before thee.” (Josh 10:8)
- “And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and HE DELIVERED THEM INTO THE HANDS of spoilers that spoiled them, and HE SOLD THEM INTO THE HANDS OF THEIR ENEMIES round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies.” (Judg 2:14)
- “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and THE LORD DELIVERED THEM INTO the hand of Midian seven years.” (Judg 6:1)
- “So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and THE LORD DELIVERED THEM INTO his hands” (Judg 11:32)
- “And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and HE DELIVERED THEM INTO THE HAND of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael, all their days.” (2 Kgs 13:3)
- “After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and DOMINION WAS GIVEN TO IT.” (Dan 7:6)
- “Until the Ancient of days came, and JUDGMENT WAS GIVEN to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.” (Dan 7:22)
- “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was GIVEN TO ME a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Cor 12:7)
- “And there went out another horse that was red: and POWER WAS GIVEN TO HIM that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.” (Rev 6:4)
- “And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And POWER WAS GIVEN UNTO THEM over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.” (Rev 6:8)
- “And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and UNTO THEM WAS GIVEN POWER, as the scorpions of the earth have power.” (Rev 9:3)
- “And to them IT WAS GIVEN that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.” (Rev 9:5)

- “And THERE WAS GIVEN UNTO HIM a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and POWER WAS GIVEN UNTO HIM to continue forty and two months” (Rev 13:5)
- “And IT WAS GIVEN UNTO HIM to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.” (Rev 13:7)

This is only representative of a great number of similar affirmations. Our response to these things is not to be one of questioning God, who “giveth not account of any of His matters” (Job 33:13). The purpose of such texts is to assure our hearts that the world is, in fact, being governed from heaven. The “government” is presently on Christ’s shoulder (Isa 9:6-7). In Daniel’s day, and the days of between Malachi and John the Baptist, the heavens were also ruling. The affirmation is “the heavens DO rule” (Dan 4:26). It is not that they ought to rule, but that they do rule! This is not a possibility, but a continual condition.

CONCLUDING THOUGHT

The text of Scripture, the spirit of Scripture, and the thrust of Scripture confirm that the multitudinous host of the Northern kingdom of Syria was given by God to the Southern kingdom of Egypt. That is why they won the battle.

HEART LIFTED AND MULTITUDES CAST DOWN

“ 12 And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it.”

Now we will see a certain Divine strategy in the events set before us. There are those who, when they are granted great things, use their seeming exploits as an occasion for pride. They imagine that their own power accounts for their triumphs. Thus, Daniel is now told that the very man who triumphed over the king of the North will not profit by the exploit. He too will be brought down.

FILLED WITH PRIDE

“ 12 And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up . . . ” Other versions read, “When the army is carried off, the king of the South will be filled with pride” NASB “When the multitude has been carried off, his heart shall be exalted,” NRSV and “he will grow arrogant.” TNK

Here we are exposed to a dreadful human disposition – that of tending to be lifted up, or to think more highly of oneself than he ought to think (Rom 12:3). Once a great triumph was realized by Ptolemy, he became puffed up – lifted up with pride like the devil himself, who he was unwittingly serving.

This is not something that was readily apparent to the flesh. His “heart” was “lifted up,” as he began to entertain unwarranted views of himself. This is something that is particularly reprehensible to God. He will not tolerate such conduct, even among the heathen, or those who have no covenantal dealings with Him at all. He has spoken about the matter frequently.

- OF ISRAEL. “Then thine heart be lifted up , and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.” (Deut 8:14)
- OF A KING OF ISRAEL. “ That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel” (Deut 17:20).
- AMAZIAH KING OF JUDAH. “Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites; and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast : abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle to thine hurt, that thou shouldest fall, even thou, and Judah with thee?” (2 Chr 25:19).
- OF KING UZZIAH. “But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense” (2 Chr 26:16).
- OF KING HEZEKIAH. “But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up : therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem” (2 Chr 32:25).
- THE KING OF TYRUS. “Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up , and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God” (Ezek 28:2).
- KING OF EGYPT. “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast lifted up thyself in height , and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the” (Ezek 31:10-11)
- KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR. “But when his heart was lifted up , and his mind hardened in pride , he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he

knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will” (Dan 5:20-21).

- HEROD. “And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory : and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost” (Acts 12:21-23).

The clear implication is that what was given to him was intended to bring out his real nature – one of pride. And, indeed, that is precisely what it did.

Faith so purifies the heart that great blessings produce great humility and thanksgiving. But it is not so in those who are anchored to this present evil world.

MANY THOUSANDS SLAUGHTERED

“ . . . and he shall cast down many ten thousand . . . ” Other versions read, “he will cast down tens of thousands,” NKJV “he will cause tens of thousands to fall,” NASB “will slaughter many thousands,” NIV “he shall overthrow tens of thousands,” NRSV and “he will be the cause of the downfall of tens of thousands.” BBE

What a dreadful epitaph to have over ones life! Not only did he bring down the army of the king of the North, but he intimidated the surrounding areas as well. It is not coincidence that history records 10,000 of the troops of Syria were slain in his initiative. “Ten thousand of the army of Antiochus were slain, four thousand taken prisoners, and with the remainder of his forces Antiochus entreated to Antioch.” Prideaux, iii. 152, 153

The true sense of the text can be seen by preceding it with the words “even though.” The idea is that even though he slaughtered so many of the enemy, yet he really did not gain from it. That, of course, is the precise point made in the next expression.

HE WILL NOT PREVAIL

“ . . . but he shall not be strengthened by it.” Other translations read, “but he will not prevail,” NKJV “yet he will not remain triumphant,” NIV “but he will not be strong,” BBE “he will have no enduring strength,” NJB and “But his success will be short-lived.” NLT

The law of harvest, or the results that are realized, are strictly in the hands of the Lord. In the text before us, the heart of the conqueror caused him to labor in vain. Justin points out that Antiochus escaped out of his hand, while he rolled himself in luxury, uncleanness, and intemperance. Justin, l. 30.

c. 1 He became noted for his idleness and drunkenness, and his caring for nothing but banquets and debaucheries, and the most obscene pleasures. History says of him, "Classical writers depict Ptolemy as a drunken, debauched reveller, completely under the influence of his disreputable associates, among whom Sosibius was the most prominent. At their instigation, Ptolemy arranged the murder of his mother, uncle, and brother." BRITANNICA 2003

That is history's assessment. The angel, however, reveals the root of the matter. His heart was lifted up within him. That is what led to his conduct and eventual fall.

Here is a classic example of putting earnings into a bag with holes. It is a condition that is caused by God, who will not overlook the pride and insolence of his offspring. As it is written, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Hag 1:6). Zophar put it in these words. Although he misapplied them to Job, they are altogether true. "In the midst of his plenty, distress will overtake him; the full force of misery will come upon him" NIV (Job 20:22).

In the text before us, Ptolemy achieved no political elevation, enhancement of power, or extension of his kingdom, even though he had realized great military exploits.

An Application

These days, it appears that not much is being said about laboring in vain, or the fruit of ones labor being consumed by the locust, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, and the palmerworm. God described these devourers as "My great army which I sent among you" (Joel 2:25). These are consumers that visit those who are lifted up with pride, and take too much credit unto themselves.

It seems to me that part of the responsibility of the church being the "pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim 3:15), is providing a proper assessment of the conditions around us. John the Baptist gave an assessment of Herod's marriage (Matt 14:4). Elijah told Ahab he was the one who was troubling the house of Israel (1 Kgs 18:17). Jesus announced the true character of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the effects of their futile labors (Matt 23:13,27-28; Lk 11:52).

Thus the angel faithfully reports the reason for Ptolemy's failure to benefit from his achievements. His heart was lifted up. This was particularly important to Daniel, because this was an enemy of his people.

THE KING OF THE NORTH WILL RETURN

“ 13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.”

More wars are made known to the prophet. This is at least the fifth involving the final remnants of the Grecian empire. We will see the result of Ptolemy not pursuing Antiochus the Great, allowing him to escape. Of course, it is to be remembered that God is in all of this, orchestrating the affairs of this world to the ultimate advantage of His people. It has already been revealed that it is His determination to give the kingdom in all of its greatness to His saints (Dan 7:18,22,27). What we have here is an abbreviated outline of how He is moving history forward to the appointed time when “the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever” (Dan 7:18).

THE KING OF THE NORTH WILL RETURN

“ 13 For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former . . . ” Other versions read, “For the king of the North will return and muster a multitude greater than the former,” NKJV “For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former” NASB and “For the king of the North will muster another army, larger than the first.” NIV

Without being redundant, I want to again remind you that the angel is revealing “what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days” (10:14). These events are primarily related to Israel, not to Grecia.

The “king of the North” is none other than Antiochus the Great, also known as Antiochus III, king of the Syrian Empire from 223 B.C. to 187 B.C. BRITANNICA 2003 Some say the massive army he organized numbered as high as “300,000 footmen, besides horsemen and elephants.” JOHN GILL

Upon the death of Ptolemy Philopator, Ptolemy Epiphanes,, a minor of five years of age succeeded him. Also known as Ptolemy V, history says of him, “After Sosibius, Ptolemy IV's corrupt minister, had murdered Ptolemy V's mother, the five-year-old king was officially elevated to the throne; Sosibius became his guardian. According to the 2nd-century BC Greek historian Polybius, all prominent officials were banished from Egypt while Sosibius' clique announced the young king's accession and the death of his parents.” BRITANNICA 2003

AFTER CERTAIN YEARS

“ . . . and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches.” Other versions read, “and shall certainly come at the end of some years with a great army and much equipment,” NKJV “and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment,” NASB and “and after several years, he will advance with a huge army fully equipped.” NIV

As a result of the shift in power, considerable confusion broke out in Egypt. Several murders took place, and inner turmoil was found in the government. This circumstance occasioned the initiative of Antiochus the Great. History speaks of this. “During the confusion in Egypt, Antiochus III, the Seleucid king, made serious inroads into Coele Syria. Ptolemy's forces mounted a counteroffensive, **CAPTURING JERUSALEM** ; but in 201 the Seleucid king returned, defeating the Ptolemaic army and later **seizing the Ptolemaic lands in Asia Minor** .” (WHICH INCLUDED PALESTINE BRITANNICA 2003

What the angel said would be “after certain years,” was actually fourteen years later, taking place in 201 B.C. They were “certain years” in that they were appointed.

This second invasion resulted in Antiochus gaining possession of all Palestine. PULPIT COMMENTARY Britannica Encyclopedia reads, “Antiochus invaded Coele Syria, defeated the Ptolemaic general Scopas at Panion near the source of the Jordan River in the year 200, **GAINED CONTROL OF PALESTINE** , and granted special rights to the Jewish temple state.”

As you can see, Israel was right in the middle of all of these wars – and there were a number of them: at least five major ones. It was their involvement that provoked this revelation. We will also see that all of this leads to the ultimate overthrow of Greece, and the coming into prominence of Rome, during whose rule the Messiah would enter into the world. This is all the Lord's doing!

CONCLUSION

There is a certain profitable perspective that can be developed from these texts. First, the manner in which God governs the world is seen more clearly. Working all things together for good, does not suggest God's people are always on the top of things. In fact, a man “greatly beloved” of God had been a captive in Babylon for over seventy years. The children of Judah would be grievously oppressed, even after the Babylonian captivity.

In governing this world, the Lord is demonstrating the wickedness of the wicked, as well as the righteousness of the righteous. His judgment is being made known as well as His mercy. In the end, it will be abundantly apparent that He is “righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works” (Psa 145:17; Dan 9:14). He gives opportunities for the hearts of men to be revealed – both those that are humble and contrite, and those that are lifted up with pride.

A gallery of holy angels are beholding the works of the Lord, and they know “the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa 6:3). That glory, while apparent among the holy personages that surround the Throne of God, is not so apparent to those who are in the world. The glory that fills the whole earth relates to the working of the Lord. It pertains to Him governing the nations, raising up and removing kings, and giving kingdoms to whomever He wills. It has to do with doing according to His will among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth as well. It relates to Him frustrating the devices of wicked people, making fools out of diviners, causing wise men to draw back in confusion, and turning their knowledge into foolishness (Isa 44:25).

God is at work in this world. It belongs to him – the “earth and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein” (Psa 24:1). He affirms, “all souls are Mine” (Ezek 18:4), and that He is “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (Num 16:22; 27:16). It is He alone that has “formed the spirit of man within him” (Zech 12:1). He can put His “hook” in the nose of rebels, “bridle” their lips, and “turn” people back by the way they came, causing them, to retrace their steps (2 Kgs 19:26; Isa 37:29).

According to appearance, it seems as though the wicked are in control, and are doing whatever they please without restraint or government of any kind. David once said, “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree” (Psa 37:35). However, he allowed his consideration to dwell longer on the circumstance, thus concluding, “Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found” (Psa 37:36). He found out what came home to Asaph. When confused by the seeming unhindered prosperity of the wicked, the chief singer “went into the sanctuary of God.” Once there, everything looked different. The whole earth really was full of God’s glory. While in that sanctuary, Asaph looked at the very same people of whom he was envious and concluded, “Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction” (Psa 73:18). They were not prospering at all. They were really being fattened for the day of slaughter (James 5:5).

This is what we have seen in our text. Amidst all of the machinations of wicked and prideful kings, the Lord’s hand was working. It was covering the righteous, upholding the faithful, and directing the wicked to their ultimate demise. God is greatly to be praised that in Christ Jesus we are brought to a place where God is working all things together for our good (Rom 8:28). It was not so for the Ptolemy’s and Antiochus’ of our text, and it is not so for the despots of our day. Fear not, child of God, “for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (Rev 19:6).

The Prophecy of Daniel

THE FUTURE IS UNFOLDED TO DANIEL, #3

Lesson # 34

INTRODUCTION

We are in the midst of one of the most extended messages ever delivered by an angel of God. There are two other extensive revelations by angels. The Law of Moses was “received by the disposition of angels” (Acts 7:53), and is referred to as “the word spoken by angels” (Heb 2:2). The book of the Revelation was also delivered to John by an angel (Rev 1:1).

Both of these cases were most unusual. In the giving of the Law, an moral code was imposed upon the world (Rom 3:19). This same law, attended by a host of ordinances, was also a covenant for Israel (Ex 19:5). It was also an elaborate revelation of types and shadows that depicted the “day of salvation” over which Jesus now presides (Col 2:17; Heb 8:5; 10:1). In the revelation given on Patmos,

the book of Divine destiny was opened and expounded to John (Rev 5), in which the government of Jesus, the determined demise of Satan and his hosts, and the ultimate triumph of the saints were chronicled.

Lengthy revelations are always an elaboration of significant events. The Lord never provides extensive explanations of matters that are incidental, or have no bearing upon His purpose and His people. No part of the Word of God is a mere commentary on historical events.

The details that are being revealed to Daniel are not only extensive, but have been challenging to the most disciplined and holy minds throughout history. The message of the angel begins in the eleventh verse of the previous chapter (10:11), and extends through the fourth verse of the twelfth chapter – sixty verses ! At that point, two additional heavenly messengers speak with Daniel.

Ponder the nature of a man who could endure such a lengthy exposure to a holy angel, taking in such a prolonged revelation. Daniel was not a young man, but an old man. He was not in Jerusalem, but in Babylon. He was not part of a flourishing church, or a successful group of godly people. Rather, he was part of a nation that was being chastised because of their disobedience. When it came to receiving a revelation from God, Daniel had no external advantages. It was not what he had accomplished that qualified him for these revelations. It was not his excellent education, or his role in the Temple worship. Rather, it was because he was “greatly beloved.” The person who is endeared to God has the advantage over all others. It can be a young Joseph, a middle-aged Moses, or an old Daniel – it makes no difference. Those who spend more time with God receive more from Him. That is why a holy person is able to see more of the truth than one who only has much worldly knowledge.

HEAVENLY ACTIVITY THAT FOCUSED UPON DANIEL

Ponder how much heavenly activity has been focused upon Daniel. It is most remarkable to behold the extent to which God made Himself known to him.

- God brought him into favor with the prince of the eunuchs (1:9).
- God gave him knowledge, skill in all learning and wisdom, and understanding in all visions and dreams (1:17).
- The meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s mysterious dream of the statue was revealed to Daniel (2:19-23).
- The meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great tree that was cut down, was revealed Daniel (4:19-28).
- The meaning of the writing on the wall of Belshazzar’s palace was made known to Daniel (5:13-29).

- An angel was sent to deliver Daniel from the lion's den (6:22).
- The four kingdoms revealed in Nebuchadnezzar first dream were further revealed to Daniel in a vision. In the vision Daniel is also given to see the throne of God, and the ascended Christ receiving all power in heaven and earth (7:1-15).
- An angel expounds the vision to Daniel, providing many of its details (7:16-27).
- Daniel is given another vision that deals extensively with the Persian and Grecian empires (8:2-12).
- A heavenly messenger speaks to Daniel concerning the length of time that the sanctuary would be trodden down (8:13-14).
- A command is issued to the angel Gabriel to make Daniel understand the vision (8:15-16).
- The angel Gabriel explains the vision to Daniel (8:17-26).
- Gabriel is sent again to Daniel, caused to fly swiftly to him, in order to provide insights concerning the coming of the Messiah (9:21-27).
- An angel is sent to Daniel to explain further details about Persia and Grecia. That angel is helped on his way by the mighty angel Michael, who assisted him in a fierce battle with a battle against wicked principalities (10:5-12:4).
- Two heavenly messengers provide additional details and instructions to Daniel (12:6-13).

There you have a commentary on the results of being “greatly beloved” of God. Those who are close to God receive much from Him.

Daniel's experiences were much like those of Paul. He might well have said the very same thing Paul did: “I will come to wisdom and revelations of the Lord . . . through the abundance of the revelations” (2 Cor 12:1,7).

SOME PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

First , let it be clear, God does not deal with incidentals, or matters that are of no consequence.

What He makes known to those dear to Him is described as “the secret of the Lord” and “His covenant” (Psa 25:14). To such the Lord unfolds what He is doing, and how things are being worked together for the ultimate good of His people.

Second , “wars and rumors of wars” are more than mere social agitation. They are evidences of changes being made by the God of heaven, and reveal struggles taking place in lofty realms. When seen properly, political upheaval and disruption reveal the shaking of principalities and powers by God. In such activity the Lord is working out His own purpose, which is nothing less than the blueprint for the world.

Seen from the highest perspective, there is a cosmic battle raging. Using crafty strategies, Satan and his hosts are attempting to overturn the purposes of God. The book of the Revelation depicts the devil’s effort as one in which he seeks to destroy the people of God. Those people are portrayed as “the woman” from which the Messiah came, and now includes the saints of all ages. It is written that Satan “cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood” (Rev 12:15). He is also said to be “wroth with the woman,” having initiated a “war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 12:16-17).

This is precisely the kind of thing that is being revealed to Daniel. Working through the earthly kingdoms of Persia and Greece, “the adversary” is seeking to destroy the people of God, upon whom God has lavished His favor, and through whom He would bring forth the Christ, who is now reigning in glory. Satan’s efforts are relentless, yet they are frustrated on every hand.

“The land of the Jews” (Acts 10:38) , defined by historians as “Palestine,” was under the domination of Egypt (the southern kingdom) from 323 B.C. to 198 B.C. It was under the control of Syria (the northern kingdom) from 198 B.C. to 142 B.C. Remember, Daniel is being told what will befall his people (10:14) in “the latter days.” This is more than mere information. It is an account of the dominance of God, and the surety of His purpose. It declares the absolute inferiority of Satan and all of his forces. They are impotent to overturn what God has determined. This record, therefore, is designed to fuel hope and strengthen faith. The spiritual understanding of these things will enable the people of God to live by faith in the midst of trouble, and maintain their grasp on hope, even though the circumstances around them appear to contradict it.

The fact that such wonderful knowledge was vouchsafed to Daniel confirms his deep love for the people who were chosen, loved by God, and for whom he faithfully prayed. There is something to be seen in this observation that is most practical. Those who have a profound love for the people of God will be given to see more concerning God’s care for and of them. A preference for the people of God qualifies one for insight concerning the things that are prepared for those who love Him. However, when the heart is distanced from the saints, the truth is also pushed away from them. Hope cannot survive where saints are not loved. There is an essential link between such love and comprehension.

OPPONENTS AND EXALTED ROBBERS IN THOSE TIMES

“ 11:14 And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall.” The angel is showing Daniel the gradual demise of the Grecian empire. The focus is upon two kingdoms between which the Jews are located. The kingdom of the North is Syria, and the kingdom of the South is Egypt. They have become involved in perpetual war, each one seeking its own interests. The Ptolemies ruled Egypt, and the Seleucids ruled Syria. The only thing they had in common was their hatred of the Jews, and their desire to rule their land.

Under the Ptolemic dynasty, the land of Israel was controlled by Egypt from 323-198 B.C. Following that, the promised land was governed by Seleucids of Syria from 198-142 B.C. Covering a good portion of the Intertestamental period, these things are included in what the angel identified as “what shall befall thy people in the latter days” (10:14).

The Spirit does not provide details on the complete, or total, Ptolemy and Seleucid dynasties. This is not intended to be a thorough history of the Grecian Empire. Allusions are made to the following:

- Ptolemy I Lager Soter (“The king of the South,” 11:5).
- Ptolemy II Philadelphus (“the king of the South whose daughter married “the king of the North” – the daughter being Berenice, and the king of the North being Antiochus II Theos, 11:6).
- Ptolemy III Euergetes (the branch coming from the same root as the daughter of the king of the South – her brother, 11:7).
- Seleucus II Callinus (the northern king) whose two sons, Antiochus III the Great and Seleucus III Ceranus, prospected a war against the “king of the South,” 11:10).
- Ptolemy IV Philopator (the southern king who succeeded Ptolemy III Euergetes, and was moved against “the king of the North,” Antiochus III, the Great, 11:11-12).
- Antiochus IV Epiphanes (the “little horn” of Daniel 7:8, 20-25, who oppressed the Jews, took away God’s daily sacrifice, and defiled the sanctuary).

Note the impersonal manner in which the Spirit refers to these kings. None of them are mentioned by name. They are all mentioned only because a prophecy is being given of what will befall the Jews in the latter time of worldly kingdoms. Also, they were all part of the crumbling Grecian Empire, which, along with all other global governments, were crushed and obliterated by the Kingdom of God (Dan 2:35, 44-45).

The Fall of the Grecian Empire

I want to once again remind you that Daniel is being provided with the details of the fall of the Grecian Empire. Already, this fall has been made known to Daniel.

- Greece was the belly and thighs of brass that would be superceded by the legs of iron and feet of iron and clay (2:32-33).
- It would suffer demise by the dominance of the Kingdom of God, like all other kingdoms (2:35).
- Greece was the four-headed leopard to whom dominion was given, yet who was superceded by a fourth dreadful and superior beastly kingdom (7:6-7).
- The demise of Greece began with the breaking of its notable horn (Alexander the Great), and the dividing of the kingdom into four parts (8:21-22; 11:4).
- The four divisions of Grecia would not be as strong as the initial kingdom, and their “latter end” is foretold (8:22-23).
- The primary divisions of the Empire were finally whittled down to Syria and Egypt – two kingdoms who are the subject of the present prophecy.
- The ruthless reign of one of the last of the Grecian kings, Antiochus Epiphanes, is described in these words: “he shall be broken without hand” (8:25).

From the reign of Alexander the Great (the “first King” of Grecia, 335 B.C., Dan 8:21), until the final overthrow of Greece by Rome (around 63 B.C.) was a period of around 272 years. The Roman Empire reigned until A.D. 476, a period of 539 years. Rome existed as a Republic from 509 B.C. until 31 B.C., and as an empire until A.D.476. The Eastern half of the Empire survived until A.D. 1453. The city of Rome itself, according to tradition, was founded in 753 B.C. BRITANNICA 2003, and GROLLIERS 2002

In the world, longevity is equated with quality and superiority. However, Daniel is being shown the real perspective of worldly governments – particularly that of Greece. The length of these kingdoms is not determined by their military strength or political savvy. It is God’s purpose that determines the duration of world empires. They rise and fall in strict accord with that purpose.

THUS FAR

Thus far, Daniel has been provided details concerning a significant portion of Grecian dominance (335 B.C. - 164 B.C.). Daniel received this revelation around 537 B.C., about 200 years before the commencement of this period. The message was sent to him from heaven because he had a concern for the covenanted people, for the city of God, and His sanctuary.

Even though it may have appeared as though Grecia was nearly invincible, yet it was in a state of gradual deterioration. That decline was not the result of human oversight, but of Divine judgment. The reason for the judgment centered in the manner in which this nation treated God's people. Remember, this word does not concern what will befall Greece, but what will befall Daniel's people.

As history moved closer to the entrance of the Messiah into the world, the nations seemed to focus more and more upon "the land of the Jews." The governments seemed to grow more powerful, and last for longer periods of time, leaving the impression they could not be restrained. This was Satan's effort to thwart the purpose of God. However, that effort will fail.

When the particular government being considered (Greece) did not receive significant opposition from the nations of the world, it began to war within itself – the North against the South, and the South against the North. This was evidence of the working of God, bringing His judgment against them, and gradually pushing them into oblivion.

MANY SHALL STAND UP

"And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south . . ."

"Those times" refer to the period when "the king of the North," Antiochus the Great, also known as Antiochus III, rose up against Egypt, the northern kingdom. Those were the times when Ptolemy V Epiphanes, king of Egypt, was yet a minor. A quotation from Britannica Encyclopedia, 2002, concerning this king, is included below.

Now we learn that several others join "the king of the North" in the attack of Egypt. History confirms that suddenly there was a unity throughout Asia Minor against Egypt. Antiochus the Great made a treaty with Philip king of Macedon. Of that alliance Britannica says, "After the death of Ptolemy IV, Antiochus concluded a secret treaty with Philip V, ruler of the Hellenistic kingdom of Macedonia, in which the two plotted the division of the Ptolemaic empire outside Egypt. Antiochus' share was to be southern Syria, Lycia, Cilicia, and Cyprus; Philip was to have western Asia Minor and the Cyclades. Antiochus invaded Coele Syria, defeated the Ptolemaic general Scopas at Panion near the source of the Jordan River in the year 200, gained control of Palestine, and granted special rights to the Jewish temple state." BRITANNICA 2002

The angel says “many” would stand up against “the king of the South.” History confirms that was “many” in number and “many” in kinds of opponents. There was resistance within the Egyptian kingdom, as well as opposition from without.

All of this was being governed by the God of heaven. Just as He stirred up adversaries against Solomon (1 Kgs 11:14,23), so He raised up adversaries against “the king of the South.” Remember, these are things that were written in “the Scriptures of truth,” and concerned what would “befall” Daniel’s people in the latter days. That lifts these events out of mere history, and places them into Divine purpose – and there is a vast difference between the two.

God has revealed Himself as One who chastens kings “with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men” (2 Sam 7:14). This condition was not limited to the kings of Judah and Israel. The record of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar confirms this to our hearts.

This prophecy is nothing less than God bringing down the kingdom of Greece. The “prince of Grecia” (Dan 10:20) will not be able to withstand the judgment of God. Fighting will break out within the Grecian ranks – the North fighting against the South. That division will so weaken the empire that it will eventually fall. The Lord is doing all of this in such a manner as to ensure the continuance of His people, also protecting “His land.” The assurance of these two factors would enable Daniel to be at peace concerning his own people.

ROBBERS OF THY PEOPLE

“ . . . also the robbers of thy people . . . ” Other versions read, “violent men of your people,” NKJV “the violent ones among your people,” NASB,NIV “the lawless among your own people,” NRSV “the rebellious children of thy people,” GENEVA “the spoilers of thy people,” Septuagint and “the sons of the destroyers of thy people.” YLT

Now Daniel is told something his own people would do during these times. The nation was sandwiched between two warring kingdoms, Syria and Egypt. One has well said, “The principal seat of the wars between Syria and Egypt was Palestine.” BARNES

Certain Jewish people were aggressive and ruthless. They would join in the rebellion, seeking to throw off the Syrian yoke in favor of Egypt. Because Antiochus the Great “ granted special rights to the Jewish temple state ,” BRITANNICA they preferred his rule to that of Ptolemy V Epiphanes. It appears they would break away from the Jewish people and engage in an ungodly initiative.

There is considerably mystery that surrounds this text. I will share what I am inclined to think is its historical fulfillment, then proceeding to establish the principles that are made known in it.

ESTABLISHING THE VISION

“ . . . shall exalt themselves to establish the vision . . . ” Other versions read, “lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision,” NASB “will rebel in fulfillment of the vision,” NIV and “lifting themselves up to make vision come true.” BBE

First, the effort attempted by these Jews was one of self-exaltation. That means their effort will fail, for “whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased” (Luke 14:11). Again Jesus said, “every one that exalteth himself shall be abased” (Luke 18:14). The God of heaven is committed to the frustration of such efforts. “He hath showed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts” (Luke 1:51). It is ever true, “The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down” (Isa 2:11).

Historical Event #1

There is an historical event that seems to parallel this passage. The events are recorded by Josephus, and pertain to the period being considered. Josephus records the following letter, written by the Jewish high priest Onias, to Ptolemy and queen Cleopatra.

“Having done many and great things for you in the affairs of the war, by the assistance of God, and that in Celesyria and Phoenicia, I came at length with the Jews to Leontopolis, and to other places of your nation,) where I found that the greatest part of your people had temples in an improper manner, and that on this account they bore ill will one against another, which happens to the Egyptians by reason of the multitude of their temples, and the difference of opinions about divine worship. Now I found a very fit place in a castle that hath its name from the country Diana; this place is full of materials of several sorts, and replenished with sacred animals: I desire, therefore, that you will grant me leave to purge this holy place, which belongs to no master, and is fallen down, and to build there a temple to Almighty God, after the pattern of that in Jerusalem, and of the same dimensions, that may be for the benefit of thyself, and thy wife and children, that those Jews who dwell in Egypt may have a place whither they may come and meet together in mutual harmony one with another, and be subservient to thy advantages; **for the prophet Isaiah foretold, that ‘there should be an altar in Egypt to the Lord God:’**and many other such things did he prophesy relating to that place.” (‘Ant. Jud.,’ 13:3; ‘Bell. Jud.,’ 7:10).

Josephus also records the reply of Ptolemy and Cleopatra.

“King Ptolemy and queen Cleopatra to Onias, send greeting. We have read thy petition, wherein thou desirest leave to be given to thee to purge that temple which is fallen down at, Leontopolis, in the Nomus of Heliopolis, and which is named from the country Bubastis; on which account we cannot but wonder that it should be pleasing to God to have a temple erected in a place so unclean, and so full of sacred animals. **But since thou sayest that Isaiah the prophet foretold this long ago, we give thee leave to do it, if it may be done according to your law, and so that we may not appear to have at all offended God herein .**” (‘Ant. Jud.,’ 13:3; ‘Bell. Jud.,’ 7:10).

The prophesy to which Onias referred is Isaiah 19:19. “In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD.” If this historical account fulfills the text, “the vision” to which the angel refers is the prophecy of Isaiah, written around 174 years before this message was delivered to Daniel.

Onias was wrong in using this text as a basis for building a temple in Egypt. The house of God was intended to be in Jerusalem, where God chose to place His Name (1 Kgs 11:36). Further, Jerusalem was in God’s land, called “His land” (Deut 32:43; Ezek 36:20; Joel 2:18; Zech 9:16).

Isaiah’s prophecy was intended to declare that the worship of the true God would be extended into Egypt. His word was primarily a declaration of the coming Messiah, and not the word of the building of another Temple for Jews in Egypt. It was the Egyptians themselves who would be turned, rather than a convenience provided for Jewish people within it. Thus Isaiah adds, “And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a savior, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it” (Isa 19:20-21).

In this view Onias arrogated to himself the fulfillment of a prophecy that God in no wise spoke of him. He is thus classed as a “robber of the people,” and not one who gave them advantages – as he supposed he did. I am inclined to this view, as it seems to fit well into the spirit of the text. It also is more in keeping with what would “befall” Daniel’s people.

Historical Event #2

There is another event that is thought to fulfill this text. It concerns certain Jews who joined the military advances of Antiochus against Ptolemy. Josephus also records that certain of these Jews professed submission to Antiochus, joining his initiative.

“ But afterward, when Antiochus subdued those cities of Celesyria which Scopas had gotten into his possession, and Samaria with them, **the Jews, of their own accord, went over to him, and received him into the city [Jerusalem], and gave plentiful provision to all his army, and to his elephants, and readily assisted him when he besieged the garrison which was in the citadel of Jerusalem.** Wherefore Antiochus thought it but just to requite the Jews’ diligence and zeal in his service: so he wrote to the generals of his armies, and to his friends, and gave testimony to the good behavior of the Jews towards him, and informed them what rewards he had resolved to bestow on them for that their behavior.” Ant.” b. xii. ch. iii. Section 3

In this case, “the vision” of which the angel speaks is the very one he is delivering. This would mean the Jews were exalting themselves to fulfill the vision now being given to Daniel. This is not an acceptable view, for then their exaltation would have been inadvertent, or without their own knowledge, for the vision sought to be fulfilled was not yet known. This cannot be, for self exaltation cannot occur without the deliberate and knowledgeable effort of the people. It cannot be accidental or causeless.

BUT THEY SHALL FALL

“ . . . but they shall fall.” Other versions read, “but without success,” NIV “but they shall fail,” NRSV and “but it will be their downfall.” BBE

Possibility #1

In the first possibility, the “they” of reference are “the robbers of thy people,” who, under Onias, sought to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah by building a Temple in Egypt. These are people from among the Jews, not people attacking them. Their effort to “establish the vision” will be dashed to the ground. They will fail in their attempt. That is, they would not fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy – the Egyptians would not become worshipers of God. The Temple project itself did last until it was finally destroyed by the Romans. However, that project itself was not the intention of Isaiah’s prophecy. Rather Isaiah referred to the spread of the knowledge of God among the Egyptians.

Possibility #2

In the second possibility, the people, involved were the Jews, who joined themselves to Antiochus the Great. Their objective was to gain favor, and thus preserve their people. Their attempt, however, fell to the ground, for when Antiochus returned from his conquests in 198, he took Jerusalem, and killed many who had aligned themselves with him. Josephus records the following.

“King Antiochus returning out of Egypt, for fear of the Romans, made an expedition against the city Jerusalem; and when he was there, in the hundred and forty-third year of the kingdom of the Seleucidae, he took the city without fighting, those of his own party opening the gates to him. And when he had gotten possession of Jerusalem, he slew many of the opposite party; and when he had plundered it of a great deal of money, he returned to Antioch.” Ant.” b. xii. ch. v. Section 2

In my judgment the nature and strength of the words “they shall fall” does not seem to fit into this view. Yet, I do see some measure of applicability to the Jew’s desire to preserve themselves by aligning with Antiochus. While Antiochus was involved in military exploits elsewhere, Scopas came with a great army from Ptolemy. He discomfited the Jews, posted guards around Jerusalem, and carried back great spoil to Egypt. ADAM CLARKE That account, however, does not fully satisfy the description “they shall fall,” or “shall not succeed.” In my judgment, there is a note of finality in those words that better fits the first possibility.

I have chosen to see this as a prophecy of the attempt of Onias to fulfill an inspired vaticination. It is my persuasion that such an attempt was duly noted in heaven. The prophecies of God are not fulfilled in such a manner. They are always in strict accord with both the nature and Word of the Lord. The effort of Onias was one of self-exaltation, something God has revealed He throws down to the ground.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We must keep before us that this is a prophecy of the Jewish people under the Grecian rule – what would befall Daniel’s people “in the latter time.” That “latter time” refers particularly to the time of the Grecian Empire, the third great Kingdom revealed in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. It was during the reign of the fourth kingdom that God would set up His kingdom – the one over which Christ now presides, and through which the salvation of God is being fully implemented. As it is written, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan 2:44).

The Son of God entered into the world during the prominence of the Roman Empire – even at the time when it was taxing the whole world, over which it politically presided (Luke 2:1-2). During Jesus’ ministry, the dominance of Rome was of great concern to Jewish leaders. In fact, this played a prominent role in their determination to put Jesus to death. They reasoned, “If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation ” (John 11:48).

With this in mind, the “latter days” of Daniel 10:14 were the days prior to the dominion of Rome. Those “latter days” were the time of Grecian rule, when “the prince of Grecia” exercised world-wide prominence. The angel is showing Daniel what will befall his people during that period of time. It was a time when God was positioning the nations and readying the people for the entrance of His Son – the time when He would commence a beneficent reign in which Satan would be overthrown, the sons of men rescued from sin, and the Gospel of Christ become the message of prominence. Nothing would, or could, succeed that was aligned against God’s revealed purpose or His chosen people! All such efforts would be finally and totally dashed to the ground.

A KING THAT NO ONE CAN WITHSTAND

“ 15 So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand.”

The focus is still upon “the king of the North,” Antiochus the Great. His exploits are noteworthy because they particularly bore upon the people of God, who suffered in the wake of his campaigns. Historically, the Jews were being dominated by Syria, then by Egypt – caught in the middle of incessant wars between those two nations. Yet, in spite of these seemingly impossibilities, the Messiah will be born, raised, and will fulfill the purpose of God. The Gospel will still be preached, “beginning at Jerusalem” (Lk 24:47). Christ’s coming disciples would still be His witnesses “both in Jerusalem, and in

all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

When we behold this passage from the higher view, we will see it is filled with all manner of Satanic activity, designed to stop God from setting up His kingdom, as Daniel declared He would (Dan 2:44-45). It is really not the aim of Antiochus the Great that we must perceive, wicked though it be. Rather, it is how Satan ATTEMPTED to use him against Daniel’s people. When God’s purpose has been served through him, God will throw Antiochus down. But until that time, he will appear invincible.

THE KING OF THE NORTH SHALL COME

“So the king of the north shall come . . .” Other versions read, “THEN the king of the North will come.” NASB,NIV,NRSV That is, in the Divine agenda, this is the next significant thing to happen – things regarding what will “befall” Daniel’s people “in the latter days.” Antiochus will return from his other exploits, with the intent to regain any territory that he had lost to Syrian opportunists, namely Scopas.

Once again, behold the manner in which the Spirit speaks of this historically significant king: “The king of the North.” His significance is in how he relates to the purpose of God. Apart from that, he is just a nameless king that will eventually pass into oblivion.

THE MOUNT AND THE MOST FENCED CITIES

“ . . . and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities . . .” Other versions read, “build a siege mound, and take a fortified city,” NKJV “cast up a siege mound, and capture a well fortified city,” NIV and “throw up siege ramps and capture a fortress city.” TNK

Cast Up A Mount

This was a ramp made of earth that permitted the army to go over the walls surrounding the cities. Considering the height of some of those walls, and the size of the “mount” that would allow the entrance of an enemy, this was quite an undertaking. It was a common practice in war, and is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture. “Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it” (2 Kgs 19:32). “And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it ; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about” (Ezek 4:2).

Fenced Cities

“Fenced cities” were protected by a wall, or fortress. Such cities are mentioned frequently in Scripture (Num 32:17,36; Josh 10:20; 1 Sam 6:18). “Fenced cities” named in Scripture include those in Judah (2 Kgs 18:13), and nineteen cities Israel was given in Canaan (Josh 19:35-39). Such cities were said to have “walls, gates, and bars” (2 Chron 8:5). Jerusalem itself was such a city (1 Kgs 3:1).

Not only did Antiochus come against fenced cities, he came against “the MOST fenced cities,” or the “well- fortified” NASB ones. He came to take back what was taken from him.

THEY SHALL NOT WITHSTAND

“ . . . and the arms of the south shall not withstand . . . ” Other versions read, “the forces of the South will not be able to withstand him,” NKJV “the forces of the South will not stand their ground,” NASB and “The forces of the South will be powerless to resist.” NIV

History confirms that Egypt, or “the forces of the South,” sent militia to counteract Antiochus’ initiative. “Scopas was sent again to oppose him, but was defeated near the sources of Jordan, lost a great part of his army, and was pursued to Sidon, where he was shut up with ten thousand men, and closely besieged. Three famous generals were sent from Egypt to raise the siege; **but they could not succeed** , and at length Scopas was forced by famine to surrender, upon the hard conditions of having life only granted to him and his men; they were obliged to lay down their arms, and were sent away stripped and naked.” Benson

Josephus wrote of this triumph. “Yet was it not long afterward when Antiochus overcame Scopas, in a battle fought at the fountains of Jordan, and destroyed a great part of his army. But afterward, when Antiochus subdued those cities of Celesyria which Scopas had gotten into his possession, and Samaria with them, the Jews, of their own accord, went over to him, and received him into the city [Jerusalem], and gave plentiful provision to all his army, and to his elephants, and readily assisted him when he besieged the garrison which was in the citadel of Jerusalem.” Ant.” book. I. chapter. 2

NEITHER HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

“ . . . neither his chosen people. . . ” Other versions read, “Even his choice troops,” NKJV “their choicest troops,” NASB “even their best troops.” NIV

“His chosen people” are the best military men of the South – those who came against Antiochus. The chief leader was Scopas, with a brilliant military career. They all fell before his crushing initiative.

NO STRENGTH TO WITHSTAND

“ . . . neither shall there be any strength to withstand.” These crack Southern troops were not able to stand against the withering attack of Antiochus, “the king of the North.”

In all of this, the arm of the Lord is evident. What happened to Egypt here, is much the same as what happened to it under the onslaught of Nebuchadnezzar. Here is how Isaiah described that

overthrow.

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man” (Ezek 30:24).

As in our text, Isaiah speaks of two kingdoms that had no covenant with God. Yet, they were both accountable to Him.

The Fortunes of War

From the human point of view, this account portrays the manner of wars – winning and/or losing. Antiochus was once routed, now he does the routing. Scopas once conquered, now he is conquered. This is why it is written, “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword” (Rev 13:10). Babylon was overthrown by the Medes and the Persians. The Medes and the Persians were overthrown by the Grecians. The Grecians were overthrown by the Romans. In the angel's message to Daniel, Syria and Egypt battle back and forth, sometimes winning, sometimes losing.

But it is not so with the kingdom of God. His kingdom is “over all” (Psa 103:19; Dan 2:39). The Lord's dominion “is from generation to generation” (Dan 4:3), and will be “until the end” (Dan 6:26). It is ever true, “His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan 7:14).

Those who fought under Pharaoh perished with him in the sea. The armies of Og and Sihon also perished with them. When Belshazzar fell, so did all of those who stood with him. That is how it is in the kingdoms of men.

But it is not so with those who put their trust in the Lord. Those who believe on Him “will not be ashamed nor confounded world without end” (Isa 45:17). Those aligned with Christ Jesus are “more than conquerors” (Rom 8:37). They will “reign with Him” (2 Tim 2:12), judging both men and angels (1 Cor 6:2). The kingdoms of the kings to which this text exposes us did not inherit the kingdom of their leader. But those who are in Christ will be given the kingdom, and come into full possession of it (Dan 7:22). There is an appointed day when it will be shouted throughout the universe, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 11:15).

In Christ, we are part of a kingdom that will never end! How often we should remind one another of these things. Faith puts us on the winning side, and is itself “the victory that overcomes the

world” (1 John 5:4). Stand fast, therefore, and quit you like men!

HE WILL STAND IN THE GLORIOUS LAND

“ 16 But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed.”

The king of the North, Antiochus the Great, having penetrated into Egypt, continues his aggressive march. Although he is moving with no apparent restraint, we will find he is under the control and domination of God. Like Satan, he will not be able to go beyond the perimeter of the will of God. In fact, one of the primary objectives of this word to Daniel is to assure him of what will “befall” his people. That is, there are some things they will go through. However, unlike their oppressors, they will survive.

HE SHALL DO ACCORDING TO HIS WILL

“But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him . . .” Other versions read, “The invader will do as he pleases,” NIV “But he who comes against him shall take the actions he pleases.” NRSV

When we read of one who is kind and good, doing whatever he wills, that is one thing. When we read of a despot doing so, that is quite another. In this case, Antiochus is moving forward in retaliatory rage. In verse seven, the brother of Berenice, Ptolemy Euergetes, had entered “the fortress of the king of the North,” fighting against him and prevailing. He was revenging the death of his sister, and he did so with both power and vengeance overthrowing Seleucus Callinicus, the father of Antiochus the Great, of whom we are now reading.

As he moves along, no one can successfully contest his will. He simply does whatever he wants. Such a circumstance would cause us to fear and quake if we did not know such power comes from God alone, for “there is no power but of God” (Rom 13:10). Whether it is Antiochus the Great, Nebuchadnezzar, of someone further down the political ladder like Pilate, they would have no power against anyone “except it were given” to them “from above” (John 19:11).

- John the Baptist explained His effectiveness to Nicodemus by saying, “A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven” (John 3:27).

- David said that one of the things that came home to him the second time was that power belongs to God: “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God” (Psa 62:11).
- The Lord revealed the reason for Nebuchadnezzar’s success by saying to Jeremiah, “I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me” (Jer 27:5).
- Through Daniel the Lord revealed, “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan 4:17).
- Again, the Psalmist wrote, “For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another” (Psa 75:6-7).

We cannot forget these things as we go through this text, allowing ourselves to be unduly influenced by historians. Antiochus the Great was operating under the scrutinizing eye of Almighty God, even though he did not have the faintest notion of that fact.

One writer has said of this verse, “This is a fair description of the advance of Antiochus the Great through Coele-Syria and Palestine. Fortress after fortress fell before his arms.” J.E.H. Johnson, 1896

Grollier’s Encyclopedia says of him, “Compared by flatterers to Alexander the Great, Antiochus set himself to regain all the land held by Seleucus I. After the death (205) of Ptolemy IV, he retook what he had lost at Raphia, then advanced as a self-styled liberator through Anatolia and crossed to Thrace, where he rebuilt (196) the old capital of Lysimachus.” GROLLIERS 2001

Again, it is said of him, “Philip was defeated by the Romans in the Second Macedonian War (200–196), and Antiochus refused to help him. Instead, taking advantage of the Romans' involvement with Philip, Antiochus marched against Egypt. Though the Romans had sent ambassadors to Ptolemy V, they could not lend him any serious assistance. When peace was concluded in 195, Antiochus came permanently into possession of southern Syria—which had been fought over for 100 years by the Ptolemies and Seleucids—and of the Egyptian territories in Asia Minor. He also gave his daughter Cleopatra in marriage to Ptolemy V. Egypt practically became a Seleucid protectorate.

In his insatiable expansionist drive, Antiochus occupied parts of the kingdom of Pergamum in 198 and in 197 Greek cities in Asia Minor. In 196 BC he crossed the Hellespont into Thrace, where he claimed sovereignty over territory that had been won by Seleucus I in the year 281 BC. BRITANNICA 2002

Here is what the angel of God said of these events: “But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him” (Dan 11:16). He does not name even one of the exploits so highly taunted by worldly historians. And why not? Because those impressive accomplishments were the result of the power that was given to him. Further, in the giving of that

power, God had not forgotten His own people, or the land with which He had identified Himself. In a very real sense, Antioch the Great was incidental.

There are at least five things being made known in this prophecy.

- That God gives power to whomever He pleases.
- Those receiving this power cannot extend themselves beyond the higher will of God.
- This will be a means of bringing out the extent of the corruption of Antiochus, which otherwise would not have been adequately known.
- His initiatives will prove to be an occasion in which God will openly show His care for His people and His land.
- Provide encouragement for those who are in the midst of adversity, and are faced with seemingly invincible foes.

HE SHALL STAND IN THE GLORIOUS LAND

“ . . . and he shall stand in the glorious land . . . ” Other versions read, “He shall stand in the Glorious Land,” NKJV “he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land,” NASB “He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land,” NIV “He shall take a position in the beautiful land,” NRSV “He will pause in the glorious land of Israel,” NLT and “he standeth in the desirable land.” YLT

Now we see the real significance of mentioning this king! He presumes to come against the land that is identified with the God of heaven. The whole world has, at some time, heard about this people and this land. Their real distinction is their religion, and everyone knows it. Antiochus does not exercise the caution of Balak (Num 22). His heart does not melt at the reports of their former conquests, nor does his courage leave him as with the citizens of Jericho (Josh 2:11-12). To Antiochus, the people seem weak and helpless, and the land can be his for the taking.

Thus boldly, and with great confidence, Antiochus the Great invades Judea. He takes up residency there, and no good intentions can be found in him.

The Glorious Land

This is now the second time Daniel has received word about the land given to the Jews. In the eighth chapter, Antiochus Epiphanes, who actually followed Antiochus the Great, and was his son, is

described as a “little horn” that waxed great and moved toward “the pleasant land.” He was within the same crumbling Empire of Greece, and was also noted for his initiative against the people of God. See with what determination and energy “the prince of Grecia” (a principality in high places – 10:20) was intent upon destroying Israel!

This land is referred to in a variety of ways in Scripture. It is most unique in its identity with the God of heaven. It is little wonder David said of it, “For the LORD hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread” (Psa 132:13-15).

Ponder these references to this land, and see what iniquity was committed in coming against it.

- “The mountain of Thine inheritance” (Ex 15:7a).
- “The place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in” (Ex 15:7b).
- “The land of promise” (Heb 11:9).
- “The Sanctuary” (Ex 15:7).
- “The land of Israel” (1 Sam 13:19).
- “The land of the Jews” (Acts 10:38).
- “The holy land” (Zech 2:12).
- “The Lord’s land” (Hosea 9:3).
- “Thy land, O Immanuel” (Isa 8:8).
- “Thy land Beulah” (Isa 62:4).
- “His land” (Deut 32:43; Psa 10:16; Ezek 36:20; Joel 2:18; Zech 9:16).
- “My land” (2 Chron 7:20; Isa 14:25; Jer 2:7; 16:18; Ezek 36:5; 38:16; Joel 1:6; 3:2).
- “The LORD’S land” (Hos 9:3).

Ponder what He has said of this land. See if there is any other land in all the world, in all history, of which such things are said!

- “The land is Mine” (Lev 25:23).
- “They have defiled My land” (Jer 16:18).
- “I will break the Assyrian in My land” (Isa 14:25).
- “I will pluck them by the roots out of My land” (2 Chron 7:20).
- “Then will the Lord be jealous for His land” (Joel 2:18).
- “He will . . . be merciful to His land” (Deut 32:43).
- “And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon His land” (Zech 9:16).

It should not surprise the thoughtful that initiatives against such a land are recorded in Scripture. The Lord takes care of what belongs to Him! When, therefore, Antiochus the Great marched into God’s land, he came under the special scrutiny of the Lord.

CONSUMED BY HIS HAND

“ . . . which by his hand shall be consumed.” Other versions read, “with destruction in his power,” NKJV “with destruction in his hand,” NASB “and will have the power to destroy it,” NIV “and all of it shall be in his power,” NRSV “intent on destroying it,” NLT “and it is wholly in his hand.” YLT

Even though some of the Jews had courted his favor, yet this king came against the land and the people. Josephus says of his treatment of the Jews: “Now it happened that, in the reign of Antiochus the Great, who ruled over all Asia, the Jews, as well as the inhabitants of Coelo- Syria, suffered greatly, and their land was sorely harassed, for while he was at war with Ptolemy Philopater, and with his son who was called “Epiphanes,” it fell out that these nations were equally sufferers, both when he was beaten, and when he beat the others; so that they were like to a ship in a storm, which is tossed by the waves on both sides; and just thus were they in their situation in the middle between Antiochus’ prosperity and its change to adversity.” — Ant. book xii. chapter iii. Section 3

Again it is said of him, “During the war of Antiochus with Egypt, the Jews and inhabitants of Coele-Syria suffered severely, and the suspense in which they were for a long time kept as to their ultimate civil relations operated injuriously for their interests.” McClintok Strong’s Cyclopeda

Principles to Be Seen

There are some kingdom principles to be seen here, for these things are “written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor 10:11).

- Meticulous heavenly records are kept of initiatives against, and abuses of, the people of God. Remember, these things were written in “the Scriptures of Truth.” This, however, not only has to do with Divine determinations, but with ultimate accountability. A record of wrongs against the people of God is maintained, and men will be held accountable for it. This is an aspect of the day of Judgment, when the books will be opened, “and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev 20:12). The recording of these events is only a prelude to the day when all abuses will be unveiled, and the saints will be fully vindicated. Those who touched what belongs to God will not escape this day of accountability.
- Often God allows His people to be in circumstances that appear unalterable. It is God’s manner to allow His people to appear as though they are utterly helpless. He did this with Abel, Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, David, Paul, and the Lord Jesus Himself. That condition, however, is only temporary “that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor 4:7).

THE POWER TOWARD THOSE WHO BELIEVE

A word must be said about the power that is toward, or devoted to, those who are in Christ Jesus. If Antiochus the Great could do much with the power that was given to him, what can saints do with the even greater power that has been given to them? Will, not men like Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar rise in the day of judgment to rebuke those who had such power, yet did little or nothing with it?

We see in these kings a faint glimpse of what can be done when God grants power to a person. In the case of these heathen kings, many of them were not aware their power came from God. To some degree Cyrus knew it (2 Chron 36:23). In measure, Nebuchadnezzar learned it (Dan 4:34-37). But most of these kings were blissfully unaware of the source of their power and authority.

The power that is toward those who believe is of such magnitude that God must show it to us, enabling us to see it. Paul prayed for those who were in Christ Jesus, that God would open the eyes of their understanding so they could see and know “the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Eph 1:19). The premier demonstration of the nature and magnitude of this power is seen in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus it is said of this power, “Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church” (Eph 1:20-22).

How ought this power to be exhibited in the saints of God? And, how should we think about it? God has revealed He is “able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us” NASB (Eph 3:20).

We are also reminded that the Kingdom of God is “not a matter of talk but of power ” NIV (1 Cor 4:20). The spiritual weaponry that has been given to us is “mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:4-5).

The Gospel we have been given is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). The preaching of the cross is described as “the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). The Christ who dwells in the saved is “the Power of God” (1 Cor 1:24). Our faith is said to stand “in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:5). Those who have been baptized into Christ “live with Him by the power of God” (2 Cor 13:4). Those who are persecuted for righteousness sake are partaking “of the afflictions of the Gospel according to the power of God” (2 Tim 1:8). Those who are begotten of God are “kept by the power of God through faith” (1 Pet 1:5). God has not given us the spirit of fear, but “of power” (2 Tim 1:7).

Be sure of this: God is not glorified by a weak, vacillating, and bumbling church . Nor, indeed, is He glorified through halting and stumbling believers. In Christ Jesus we have come into a domain of unspeakable power and might. It is the kind of circumstance that enables us to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph 6:10).

All of this is not even to mention our adversary the devil, who has been given a measure of power, and exploits it to the fullest. He is never presented as failing to exhaust all of the possibilities granted to him, doing so quickly and thoroughly. When given an opportunity to tempt, he does so. When granted access to Job, he took it. When given an hour to work against the Son of God, he zealously, and with determination, entered into that hour. Your own experience will confirm that every single time you give him an opportunity, he seizes it zealously. But if we do not think about these things, Satan will gain the advantage over us. Our ignorance is an open door to our adversary, and spiritual understanding will close that open door.

It will NOT be to any person’s advantage to “stand before the judgment seat of Christ,” having taken less advantage of the power God in Christ Jesus than Antiochus Epiphanes, Nebuchadnezzar, or Cyrus, and others, took of power given to them as earthly rulers.

This text declares a series of circumstances designed to challenge the hearts of God’s people, and cause hope to flourish within them. It declares a disadvantage that is dissipated by God.

THE NATURE OF CORRUPTION

“ 17 He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him.”

Here we will be confronted with the subtlety of “the king of the North,” Antiochus the Great. He is drunk with power, and thinks to expand his dominion by every means possible. However, things will not go as he wants, for the hand of God is really manipulating the circumstances.

HE SHALL SET HIS FACE

“He shall also set his face . . .” Other versions read, “He will determine,” NIV “He shall set his mind,” NRSV “He shall set his face,” RSV “it will be his purpose,” BBE and “he will make plans.” NLT

It is good for us to become familiar with Scriptural expressions. They are more precise and thorough than the eloquence of the worldly-wise. To set the face toward anything is to determine or resolve to go there, or to actually do the thing considered. Here the notions of Antiochus the Great are fueled by his success and seeming invincibility. He is not satisfied with what he has. Thus he is fulfilling the saying of Solomon, “the eyes of man are never satisfied” (Prov 27:20). He carries the same trait as Solomon’s four insatiable things, which are “never satisfied:” “The grave; and the barren womb; the earth that is not filled with water; and the fire that saith not, It is enough” (Prov 30:16). One can only imagine the abuses to which we would be subjected if God was not “above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph 4:6). If our times were not in His hand (Psa 31:15) , we would all have expired long ago!

Already Antiochus has driven Egypt’s chief military officer into obscurity, and subdued the land of Palestine. He saw this as an occasion to extend his empire. Here he intends to invade and wholly subjugate the land of Egypt.

A Lesson to Learn

We ought to learn from this text that if men like Antiochus the Great set their face steadfastly to do evil, how much more ought the saints to set their face to do good! Not much will be done for the Lord unless our faces are determinedly “set.” When the time for Christ’s sacrifice drew near, He “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Lk 9:51). When it came to preaching, Paul’s face was set. He said “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor 2:2). Jesus told him he was going to preach the Gospel in Rome (Acts 23:11). Sensing the truth of this early, Paul wrote to the Romans, “So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” (Rom 1:15).

Setting the face is involved in the expression, “Looking unto Jesus” (Heb 12:2). This is something that includes resolve, determination, and alertness to open and closed doors that have been set before us. The American church, I fear, is sadly lacking in such determination. It is too easily turned aside to profitless and distracting pursuits.

ENTERING WITH THE STRENGTH OF HIS WHOLE KINGDOM

“ . . . to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom . . . ” Other versions read, “to come with the power of his whole kingdom,” NASB and “to come with the might of his entire kingdom.” NIV

Although he had been successful in most of his previous campaigns, Antiochus realized something more was going to be required to subdue the mighty kingdom of Egypt. It would, in his judgment, necessitate the full force of his kingdom. He was determined to overwhelm Ptolemy Epiphanes, who was still quite young.

The Upright Ones

“ . . . and upright ones with him; thus shall he do . . . ” Other versions read, “bringing with him a proposal of peace,” NASB “and will make an alliance with the king of the South,” NIV “he shall bring terms of peace,” NRSV “and with him equitable conditions,” ASV “but in place of this he will make an agreement with him,” BBE “and his confederates with him,” GENEVA and “he shall make upright conditions with him.” DOUAY Versions favoring “upright ones” include KJV, NKJV, DARBY, RWB, WEB YLT.

The meaning of the word that is translated “upright ones” is “straight, upright, correct, right, fitting, and righteous.” STRONGS Thus several translations have applied it to the procedure that Antiochus followed, seeking an alliance with Egypt rather than determining to pummel it into subjection.

This, in my judgment, is not sound reasoning. The rules of language must not be allowed to override the sense of Scripture. We have already been told that this king is in a state of greed, setting his face to swallow up more territory in his lust for power. It seems highly unlikely to me that the Holy Spirit would ascribe righteous motives to such a man.

I prefer to see “the righteous ones” as representatives of the Jews, whom Antiochus determined to bring with him. They were not “righteous ones” by character, but were considered to be so by comparison with the heathen. Also, because the Lord had chosen them, they were so considered. These Jews had already extended themselves to be allied with him, and he had granted them certain favors. In my judgment, this point is unworthy of further consideration. I will only add that Antiochus appeared to

think the inclusion of Jewish people would add more weight to his deceptive attempt to form a coalition with Egypt. It had a more peaceable appearance, as though he was now getting along very well with the Jews.

A Change of Plans

During this period of determination, Rome was gradually increasing in power, as though waiting for the time when it would overthrow Greece. Already Rome had overthrown Philip of Macedon, with whom Antiochus had sought an alliance. Of this defeat McClintok & Strong's Cyclopaedia says, "Philip was driven from his commanding position, and made unsuccessful overtures for peace. In the next year he lost the fatal battle of Cynoscephalae, and was obliged to accede to the terms dictated by his conquerors. The remainder of his life was spent in vain endeavors to regain something of his former power, and was embittered by cruelty and remorse. In 1 Macc. 8:5 the defeat of Philip is coupled with that of Perseus as one of the noblest triumphs of the Romans."

Hearing of this defeat, Antiochus changed his plans. We must see that his heart, which was "in the hand of the Lord," was actually being "turned" by the Lord for the accomplishment of a purpose higher than his own (Prov 21:1). When the will of man clashes with the will of the Lord, it cannot ultimately flourish.

THE DAUGHTER OF WOMEN

". . . and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her . . ." Other versions read, "And he shall give him the daughter of women to destroy it," NKJV "he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it," NASB "And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans will not succeed or help him." NIV

Rather than being a righteous plan, as some of the versions suggest, this was an effort of Antiochus to overcome the kingdom of Egypt, not unite with it. By giving his daughter in marriage to the king of the South, he thought to gain access to valuable information that would aid him in bringing Egypt under his dominion. It was an evil and subtle attempt.

The king to whom Antiochus gave his daughter was Ptolemy V Epiphanes, then sixteen years of age. The daughter of Antiochus was Cleopatra, well known queen of Egypt. She is called "the daughter of women" because of her unexcelled beauty.

Josephus says the following of this marriage. "Ptolemy now formed an alliance with Antiochus, and married his daughter Cleopatra (Polyb. 28:17, 11), who received as a dowry (comp. Daniel 11:13-16) Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine . Joseph. Ant. 12, 4, 1

Another source reads: "Daughter of Antiochus III the Great of the Syrian Empire, Cleopatra was married to

Ptolemy V in 193 as part of the Peace of Lysimacheia, concluding warfare and border conflicts between Syria and Egypt. She brought as her dowry the revenues (but apparently not the ownership) of Coele-Syria, a land that Egypt had long sought to recover; and the total agreement helped to ensure Egypt's neutrality in Syria's continuing struggles with the Romans. When Ptolemy V died (180), Cleopatra became the true ruler of Egypt as regent for her young son, and she ruled equitably, keeping peace with Syria while doing nothing to alienate Rome, and thereby kept Egypt free of invasion." BRITANNICA 2002

The plan certainly seemed ingenious enough. The lot has, indeed, been "cast into the lap." Now we will see if "its every decision is of the Lord" or not NKJV (Prov 16:33).

Remember, these events will actually take place in 193 B.C. Daniel is hearing of them in 537 B.C., 344 years before they will take place. He is not being told of these events in great generalities, but in words of remarkable details. This will enable the faithful who were living at that time to see the hand of the Lord in the events that otherwise could drive them to despair. In this case, people would be able to survive through their knowledge of the Scriptures. Such a marvelous benefit, of course, did not end with the First Covenant, nor has it been confined to the Jews alone.

SHE SHALL NOT STAND ON HIS SIDE

". . . but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him." Other versions read, "but she shall not stand with him, or be for him," NKJV "she will not take a stand for him or be on his side," NASB "but his plans will not succeed or help him," NIV "but it shall not succeed or be to his advantage," NRSV and "but this will not take place or come about." BBE

From an earthly point of view, this was a shrewd plan, made by a highly successful king. Yet, his own daughter went against nature, choosing not to honor the desires of her father. His counsel was thus overturned by God, like the good counsel of Ahithophel 2 Sam 17:14).

Jerome says of this account, "Antiochus, desirous not only of possessing Syria, Cilicia, and Lycia, and the other provinces which belonged to Ptolemy, but of extending also his own scepter over Egypt itself, betrothed his own daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy, and promised to give as a dowry Coelo-Syria and Judea. But he could not obtain possession of Egypt in this way, because Ptolemy Epiphanes, perceiving his design, acted with caution, and because Cleopatra favored the purposes of her husband rather than those of her father." In "Hebrews Commonwealth," Jahn writes, "He indulged the hope that when his daughter became queen of Egypt, she would bring the kingdom under his influence; but she proved more faithful to her husband than to her father."

Instead of weakening Ptolemy as Antiochus had intended, Cleopatra rather alerted him to the evil intentions of her father, thus causing his plans to be cast down. Thus we have lived out before our minds the truth that is declared in Scripture.

- “Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine” (Job 18:5).
- “And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken” (Job 38:15).
- “For the arms of the wicked shall be broken” (Psa 37:17).
- “That the triumphing of the wicked is short” (Job 20:5).

WHAT SHOULD WE LEARN?

We should learn from this that “if God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31). It is no wonder that we are told, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet 5:7). Does God have more care for heathen Egypt than for the church He has purchased with “His own blood” (Acts 20:28)? Even when we endure hardships because of our faith, and for righteousness sake, we can expectantly “commit the keeping of [our] souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Pet 4:19). No person who does this will be ashamed.

ONE CAUSES THE REPROACH TO CEASE

“ 18 After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him.”

This verse will confirm to us that the wicked cannot learn. They are like brute beasts who cannot be taught. Sin and iniquity plugs the hears and hardens the heart, so that what seems very apparent to the godly cannot be seen to any degree. When a person’s heart is “lifted up,” and they are intent upon doing evil, they become deaf to God, and hardened to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Antiochus does not learn from his frustrated attempts.

HE SHALL TURN HIS FACE TO THE ISLES

“After this shall he turn his face unto the isles , and shall take many . . .” Other versions read, “to the coastlands,” NKJV “to the islands,” BBE and “to the coastal cities.” NLT

History tells us that Antiochus had developed a significant navy with one hundred large ships

and two hundred smaller ones. With this fleet he “subdued most of the maritime places on the coast of the Mediterranean, and took many of the cities, Rhodes, Samos, Euboa, Colophon, and others.” CLARKE These were on the maritime coasts of Greece, Cyprus, and other islands. The Mediterranean was between Syria and Asia Minor. Thus we see that Antiochus had turned his attention to the opposite sections of the globe. In this endeavor, Antiochus fought with the Romans, who would be the next rulers of the world. One historian says these wars with Rome lasted three years. JAHN, HEBREWS COMMONWEALTH

History says of this initiative, “ In his insatiable expansionist drive, Antiochus occupied parts of the kingdom of Pergamum in 198 and in 197 Greek cities in Asia Minor. In 196 BC he crossed the Hellespont into Thrace, where he claimed sovereignty over territory that had been won by Seleucus I in the year 281 BC. A war of harassment and diplomacy with Rome ensued. A number of times the Romans sent ambassadors demanding that Antiochus stay out of Europe and set free all the autonomous communities in Asia Minor. To meet these demands would have meant the actual dissolution of the western part of the Seleucid Empire, and Antiochus thus refused. Tensions with Rome increased further when the great Carthaginian general Hannibal, who had fled from Carthage in the aftermath of defeat by the Romans in the Second Punic War, found refuge with Antiochus in 195 BC and became his adviser.” BRITANNICA 2002

Antiochus’ lust for power will soon be cut short. His time, and the time of the deteriorating Grecian Empire is running out. However, the purpose of God is moving steadily ahead to the “fulness of time” when the God will send forth His Son, “made of a woman, made under the Law” (Gal 4:4).

A PRINCE SHALL CAUSE THE REPROACH TO CEASE

“ . . . but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease . . . ” Other versions read, “But a ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end,” NKJV “But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him,” NASB “but a commander will put an end to his insolence,” NIV “but a chief, by his destruction, will put an end to the shame offered by him,” BBE and “but a magistrate will put a stop to his outrages.” NJB

Antiochus has lived by the sword, and he will be brought down by one (Rev 13:10). God will see to it that this happens. It will not be the result of happenstance or mere human planning.

The prince of reference is Lucius Scipio, who “decisively defeated Antiochus III and threw him back permanently to the other side of the Taurus range.” BRITANNICA 2002

An even fuller account of the defeat of Antiochus is given, revealing something of what was involved in the final overthrow of Greece. “ Historians have debated Rome’s reasons for this momentous decision, with suggestions ranging from a desire to protect Athenians and other Greeks from Philip out of philhellenism to fear of a secret alliance between Philip and the Seleucid king Antiochus III. Yet these suggestions are belied by the fact that Rome later treated the Greek cities callously and that no fear is apparent in Rome’s increasing demands on Philip and in its refusal to negotiate seriously with him through the course of the war. Rather, the Second Macedonian War (200–196) fits the long pattern of Roman readiness to go to war in order to force ever more distant

neighbors to submit to superior Roman power.

In the winter of 200–199, Roman legions marched into the Balkans under the command of Publius Sulpicius Galba. During the next two years there was no decisive battle, as the Romans gathered allies among the Greeks—not only their previous allies, the Aetolians, but also Philip's traditional allies, the Achaeans, who recognized Roman military superiority. The consul of 198, Titus Quinctius Flamininus, took over the command and defeated Philip at the battle of Cynoscephalae in 197. The terms of settlement allowed Philip to remain king of Macedon but stipulated payment of an indemnity and restrictions on campaigning beyond the borders of his kingdom. Flamininus then sought to win the goodwill of the Greeks with his famous proclamation of their liberation at the Isthmian Games of 196. To lend credibility to this proclamation, he successfully argued against senatorial opposition for the withdrawal of Roman troops from all Greece, including the strategically important “Fetters” (the key garrisons of Acrocorinth, Chalcis, and Demetrias).

Even before the Romans withdrew, the seeds had been sown for their reentry into the East. As an active king, Antiochus III set out to recover the ancestral possessions of his kingdom on the western coast of Anatolia and in Thrace. In response to the Roman demand that he stay out of Europe, the king attempted to negotiate. When the Romans showed little interest in compromise, Antiochus accepted the invitation of Rome's former allies, the Aetolians, who felt they had not been duly rewarded with additional territory after the victory over Philip, to liberate the Greeks. Upon crossing into Greece, however, the king found no enthusiasm among the other Greeks for a war of liberation and was defeated at Thermopylae in 191 by legions under the command of Manius Acilius Glabrio.

Antiochus returned home to gather a larger army. In 190 Lucius Cornelius Scipio was elected consul in Rome and was authorized to recruit a force for a campaign against Antiochus. Accompanying Lucius as a legate was his brother, the great general Scipio Africanus. In an attempt to avert war, Antiochus offered to accept the earlier Roman terms, only to find that the Romans had now extended their demands to keep Antiochus east of the Taurus Mountains of Anatolia. Unable to accept, Antiochus fought and lost to Scipio's army at Magnesia ad Sipylum in the winter of 190–189. In the following Treaty of Apamea (188), the Seleucid kingdom was limited to Asia east of the Taurus range and was required to pay an indemnity of 15,000 talents and to give up its elephants and all but 10 ships. Rome punished its opponents, the Aetolians, and rewarded its supporters, notably Pergamum and Rhodes, which were granted new territories, including Greek cities, at the expense of “the liberation of the Greeks.” The consul of 189, Gnaeus Manlius Vulso, came east with reinforcements, took command of the legions, and proceeded to plunder the Galatians of Anatolia on the pretext of restoring order. BRITANNICA 2002

One historian records the following of this overthrow. “Antiochus lost all presence of mind, and withdrew his garrisons from all the cities on the Hellespont, and, in his precipitate flight, left all his military stores behind him. He renewed his attempts to enter into negotiations for peace, but when he was required to relinquish all his possessions west of the Taurus, and defray the expenses of the war, he resolved to try his fortune once more in a battle by land. Antiochus brought into the field seventy thousand infantry, twelve thousand cavalry, and a great number of camels, elephants, and chariots armed with scythes. To these the Romans could oppose but thirty thousand men, and yet they gained a decisive victory. The Romans lost only three hundred and twenty-five men; while, of the forces of Antiochus, fifty thousand infantry, four thousand cavalry, and fifteen elephants were left dead on the field, fifteen hundred men were made prisoners, and the king himself with great difficulty made his escape to Sardis. He now humbly sued for peace, and it was granted on the terms with which he had formerly refused compliance — that he should surrender all his possessions west of the Taurus, and that he should defray the expenses of the war. He further obligated himself to keep no elephants, and not more than twelve ships. To secure the performance of these conditions, the Romans required him to deliver up twelve hostages of their own selection, among whom was his son Antiochus,

afterward surnamed Epiphanes.” — Jahn’s “Hebrew Commonwealth,” pp. 248, 249

Another record reads, “When Antiochus refused, he was decisively defeated in the Battle of Magnesia near Mt. Sipylus, where he fought with a heterogeneous army of 70,000 men against an army of 30,000 Romans and their allies. Although he could have continued the war in the eastern provinces, he renounced all claim to his conquests in Europe and in Asia Minor west of the Taurus at the peace treaty of Apamea. He also was obliged to pay an indemnity of 15,000 talents over a period of 12 years, surrender his elephants and his fleet, and furnish hostages, including his son Antiochus IV. His kingdom was now reduced to Syria, Mesopotamia, and western Iran.” BRITANNICA 2003

Lucius Scipio did not engage in this initiative out of any sense of justice. Like Antiochus, he had his own agenda. Thus the angel says, “for his own behalf” he would cause the reproach against the Romans to cease. Once again, however, his personal agenda was subject to the higher agenda of the Lord. What he intended to serve his own purpose was actually fulfilling the will of the Lord. It was nothing less than the execution of what had been written in “the Scriptures of Truth.” He was in the circumference of Divine will, and did not even know it

Benson reports the staggering results of this decisive battle. “In this battle Antiochus lost fifty thousand footmen and four thousand horsemen; one thousand four hundred were taken prisoners, and he himself escaped with difficulty.”

Without His Own Reproach

“ . . . without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him.” Other versions read, “and with the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him,” NKJV “moreover, he will repay him for his scorn,” NASB “and will turn his insolence back upon him,” NIV and “in such a way that he will be unable to repay outrage for outrage.” NJB

A number of things are intended by this expression. In all of them the judgment of God is apparent.

- The conquering Romans endured no setback – not a single one.
- The defeat was so thorough that Antiochus could not regroup and retaliate.
- No mistakes, according to appearance, were made, as when Antiochus sought to bring Egypt down by giving his daughter in marriage to Ptolemy V.
- The reproach that was brought upon Rome by Antiochus was turned upon his own head.

By this prophecy the angel means that the reproaches that Antiochus was hurling at the

advancing Romans would be caught by a leader more capable than himself, and hurled back in his face. The Roman conqueror would realize no embarrassment, nor would his reputation be tarnished by any defeat. Antiochus the Great would reap what he sowed.

A LESSON TO BE LEARNED

If such a benefit can be realized by a Roman conqueror who knew nothing of God, what will be the extent of the triumph of the saints of God? I will tell you, they will come through both fire and flood with no evidence of hurt upon them. Satan will finally be bruised under their feet (Rom 16:20), and their enemies will bow down before them and publically acknowledge that Christ has loved them (Rev 3:9).

In the glory, when the assembled universe stands before the Divine tribunal, there will be absolutely no question about who was right, who won, or who the conquerors are. Indeed, there may be questions about these things now, but there will be none then! The day of judgment will not be a time of discovery, but of vindication. The righteous will “shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt 13:43). The devil, his angels, and all of the wicked will be very apparent. The Lord Jesus will be seen in all of His glory. The Father will be seen in all of His glory. The holy angels will be seen in all of their glory (Lk 9:26). The saints themselves will appear with Jesus in glory (Col 3:4). There will be no questions about who is on the Lord’s side and who is not. Everything that obscures will be gone.

The triumph of the righteous will be thorough, evident, and without question. There will be no shame upon them, and they will assume the position of judges. Trials that ended unjustly in this world will be resumed and finalized to the glory of God. No wrong will be left unvindicated, and no right left unjustified. The saints will be fully and publically exonerated then wicked will be completely and openly condemned.

HE WILL STUMBLE, FALL, AND NOT BE FOUND

“ 19 Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.”

Now we come to the final chapter of this despot – a violent and greedy king who reigned for thirty-six years (223-187 B.C.). Like Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, Cyrus, and Alexander the Great, Antiochus the Great will be finally seen as “ not so great.”

THE FORT OF HIS OWN LAND

“Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land . . .” Other versions read, “the fortress of his own land,” NKJV “the fortresses of his own country,” NIV “the strength of his own land,” Septuagint and “the strongholds of his own country.” NJB

The idea is that Antiochus would stop trying to expand his kingdom, cease to fight, and retreat to the strongholds of his own land for protection. History confirms he attempted no further exploits. An enormous indemnity of 15,000 talents was levied against him, as the Romans demanded that he pay for the war. He was allowed twelve years to complete the payment. “He also was obliged to pay an indemnity of 15,000 talents over a period of 12 years.” BRITANNICA 2003 15,000 talents is equivalent to between 1,800,000 and 1,440,000 pounds: that is, between 900 and 720 tons. This was paid in either gold or silver. Over a twelve year period, that would be approximately 67.5 tons of gold or silver a year. Such an enormous amount is difficult to perceive.

HE SHALL STUMBLE, FALL, AND NOT BE FOUND

“ . . . but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.”

Here is the explanation of the final demise of Antiochus the Great. He stumbled, fell, and disappeared, to be found, or seen, no more. Here is the historical account. “ In 187 Antiochus was murdered in a Baal temple near Susa, where he was exacting tribute in order to obtain much needed revenue.” BRITANNICA 2003

Diodorus Sicules, Strabo, and Justin give this account of his death. “Being under the greatest difficulties how to raise the stipulated sums, he marched into his eastern provinces to exact the arrears of taxes; and, attempting to plunder the temple of Jupiter Belus at Elymais, he was opposed by the populace, and he and his attendants slain.” ADAM CLARKE

Another record reads: “Antiochus the great endeavoring to rob the temple of Bel, the barbarians near to (Elymais) rose of themselves, and slew him; and so never returned to Syria any more, but died in the province of Elymais, being slain by the Persians there, as related, and was never found more, or was buried; and this was the end of this great man, of whom so many things are said in this prophecy, and others follow concerning his successors. He died in the thirty seventh year of his reign, and the fifty second of his age.” Universal History, vol. 9. p. 270

Thus ends the record and life of Antiochus III – the Great. He was broken off like Alexander the great, and his life cut short like Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans. Although the circumstances had a different appearance, his life abruptly ended like that of Herod. He had presumed to come into “the glorious land,” and he paid the consequences.

CONCLUSION

This has been an exceedingly difficult lesson for me to develop. This is not owing to any lack of clarity in the text itself, or because of the existence of any questions about what actually took place. There really is no guesswork or surmising in compiling the facts, for there is nearly total unanimity among both secular and Christian writers about what actually took place.

For me, the difficulty lies in the repeated references one must make to history. Also, for me, filling the pages with quotations from other men is attended with a decided measure of difficultness. It is not that this is wrong. In fact, there is a great deal of edification and learning that is to be found in this record. However, in it all, I must confess that I had to continually bring my mind away from a purely historical view, choosing instead to behold the marvelous working of the Lord in these events. Personal discipline had to be exerted not to be unduly impressed by the remarkable precision of this prophecy.

All of this confirms the potentially corrupting effects of mere academia. Faith really expects the prophecies of God to be precise, and is not amazed when they come to pass. It is unbelief that staggers at the promises of God (Rom 4:20). Yet, academia tends to awaken unbelief, causing men to stagger about like a drunken man in the citadel of truth itself. For that reason, my prayer is that, due to any deficiencies on my part, these things are not distracting to you.

Again, I must emphasize the various things that are associated with this message. They are weighty considerations, and will assist in delivering the soul from carnal impressions and shallow responses – liabilities associated with a purely pedantic approach to the truth of God.

- This message was brought from heaven to Daniel.
- A wicked principality made an extended effort to stop it from being delivered to Daniel.
- These were matters that had been written in “the Scriptures of Truth,” the book of Divine destiny.
- They were given in answer to the prayer of a righteous man.
- They are also described as things that would “befall” Daniel’s people in the latter days.

Such a revelation, therefore, is filled with food for thought, encouragement for the faint-hearted, and strength for battle-weary soldiers. This account shows us something of what is involved in God being for us, and the devil being against us. It unveils the intense activity in God’s kingdom. Now, take the message and let it feed your soul.

THE FUTURE IS UNFOLDED TO DANIEL, #4

Lesson # 35

INTRODUCTION

In a grand display of Divine love, Daniel is being shown what will befall his people in the times prior to the coming of the Messiah. Particular attention is being given to Israel's experience during the reign of the Persian and Grecian Empires. During those times, it is apparent that Satan launched an aggressive campaign against the covenanted people of God. The effort involved struggles in high places, and disruptive influences upon the earth. It was a time of social and political agitation, of wars and rumors of wars.

With remarkable detail and accuracy, a significant number of kings, together with some of their activities, have been mentioned – particularly as they related to the Jews. Kings that have been mentioned thus far include:

- Darius the Mede – 11:1 (At the time of this revelation, around 536 B.C.)
- Three kings of Persia – 11:2a (Cambyses – 529-523 B.C., Pseudo-Smerdis – 523-522 B.C., Darius Hystapes – 522-485 B.C.)
- A fourth king – 11:2b (Xerxes – 486-465 B.C.)
- A mighty king – 11:3 (Alexander the Great – 335-301 B.C.)
- Four successors of the mighty king – 11:4; 8:8 (Ptolemy, Cassander, Lysimachus, and Seleucus I.)

- Kings of the North – 11:6-8, 11,13,15 (Syria – Antiochus II Theos – 261-246 B.C., Seleucus II Callinicus – 246-226 B.C., Antiochus III (the Great) – 223-187 B.C., Seleucus III Ceraunus – 226-223 B.C., Antiochus IV Epiphanes – 175-164. B.C)
- Kings of the South – 11:59,11,14 (Egypt – Ptolemy I Lager Soter – 323-285 B.C., Ptolemy II Philadelphus – 285-246 B.C., Ptolemy III Euergetes I – 246-221 B.C., Ptolemy IV Philopator – 221-203 B.C., Ptolemy V Epiphanes – 203-181 B.C.).

Thus far, a period of no less than 363 years has been covered. With very few exceptions, this was a period of political upheaval. With the exceptions of the time of Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian, it was also a period during which no known Prophet was speaking for God, and no Scripture was being written. Yet, the Lord is making known to Daniel that He will not forsake His people, nor suffer their enemies be ungoverned, or realize their own wicked objectives.

The angel is showing Daniel the arena in which God will be working. He has, so to speak, put Himself in a seemingly impossible situation. From every external point of view, the enemy has the advantage. Yet, in spite of appearance, we read of the continued frustration of the enemy: “within a few days he shall be destroyed,” 20 “and shall be broken,” 21 “even for a time,” 24 “but he shall not stand,” 25 “shall destroy him,” 26a “many shall fall down slain,” 26b and “but it shall not prosper.” 27

God is in control of the circumstances, down to the most infinitesimal detail.

UNIQUE EXPRESSIONS

- FINANCIAL IMPOSITION. “A raiser of taxes” (v 20a) – “imposes taxes,” NKJV “an oppressor,” NASB “a tax collector,” NIV , “an official.” NRSV
- POLITICAL SPLENDOR. “The glory of the kingdom” (v 20b) – “glorious kingdom,” NKJV “Jewel of his kingdom,” NASB “royal splendor.” NIV
- IMPOSED BREVITY. “Within few days” (v 20c) – “In a few years,” NIV “after a short time,” BBE “soon,” NAB “after a very brief reign.” NLT
- CORRUPT PERSONALITY. “A vile person” (v 21a) – “a despicable person,” NASB “a contemptible person,” NIV “a low person,” BBE “one despised,” DOUAY “one who has been set at nought.” Septuagint
- ROYALTY. “The honor of the kingdom” (v 21b) – honor of royalty,” NKJV “honor of kingship,” NASB “royal majesty,” NRSV “kingly honor,” DOUAY “royal honors,” NJB “not directly in line for royal succession.” NLT
- EXPLOITING THE TIMES. “Come in peaceably” (21 c) – “come in a time of tranquility,” NASB “invade the kingdom when the people feel secure,” NIV “come without warning,” NRSV “come in a time of security,” ASV “come in a time of peace,” BBE “come in privately,” DOUAY “slip in when least expected.” NLT
- FRAUD. “Obtain the kingdom by flatteries” (v 21d) – “seize the kingdom by intrigue,” NKJV “get the kingdom by fair words,” BBE “obtain the kingdom by fraud,” DOUAY “obtain the kingdom by blandishments,” JPS “by deceitful ways,” Septuagint “by stealth and fraud,” NAB “by flattery and intrigue.” YLT
- MILITARY SUPERIORITY. “The arms of a flood” (v 22a) – “force of a flood,” NKJV “overflowing forces,” NASB “overwhelming army,” NIV “overwhelming forces,” ASV “great armies.” NLT
- CRUSHED. “They be overflown” (v 22b) – “swept away,” NKJV “overwhelmed from before him,” ASV “completely taken away,” BBE “washed away as with a flood,” Septuagint “overwhelmed by him and crushed,” NAB “utterly routed and crushed.” NJB
- LEADERSHIP. “The prince of the covenant” (v 22c) – “ruler of the agreement,” BBE “head of the covenant,” Septuagint “a covenant prince,” NLT “the covenant leader.” YLT
- DECEIT. “He shall work deceitfully” (v 23a) – “act deceitfully,” NKJV “practice deception,” NASB “working falsely,” BBE “deal deceitfully,” DOUAY “act treacherously,” NJB “making deceitful promises.” NLT

- **SMALL BUT POWERFUL.** “Strong with a small people” (v 23b) – “become strong with a small number of people,” NKJV “gain power with a small force of people,” NASB “with only a few people he will rise to power,” NIV “become strong with a small party,” NRSV “with only a few people he will rise to power,” NIB “despise the smallness of his following, grow ever stronger.” NJB
- **A CHOICE AREA.** “The fattest places of the province” (v 24a) – “riches places,” NKJV “richest parts of the realm,” NASB “fertile places,” BBE “rich and plentiful cities,” DOUAY “richest areas of the land.” NLT
- **SHREWD STRATAGEMS.** “Forecast his devices” (v 24b) – “devise his plans,” NKJV “devise his schemes,” NASB “plot the overthrow,” NIV “plotting his stratagems.” NJB
- **LIMITATION.** “For a time” (v 24c) – “only for a time,” NKJV “this will last only a short while.” NLT
- **AROUSAL.** “Stir up his power and courage” (v 25a) – “stir up his power and determination,” NRSV “his strength and his heart.” DOUAY
- **MOBILIZATION.** “Stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army” (v 25b) – “mobilize an extremely large and mighty army,” NASB “wage war with a large and very powerful army,” NIV “wage war with a much greater and stronger army.” NRSV
- **FUTILITY.** “He shall not stand” (v 25c) – “he will not be able to stand,” NIV “he shall not succeed,” NRSV “he will be forced to give way,” BBE “but to no avail.” NLT
- **OVERTHROWN FROM WITHIN.** “Feed of the portion of his meat” (v 26a) – “eat his choice food,” NASB “eat from the king’s provisions,” NIV “eat the royal rations,” NRSV “they that eat bread with him,” DOUAY “his table companions.” NAB
- **SLAUGHTER.** “Many shall fall down slain” (v 26b) – “many will fall in battle,” NIV “a great number will be put to the sword,” BBE “many will fall in the great slaughter.” NJB
- **SINFUL INTENTIONS.** “Hearts shall be to do mischief” (v 27a) – “bent on evil,” NKJV “intent on evil,” NASB “fixed on doing evil,” BBE “meditate mischief,” DARBY “resolved on evil.” NAB
- **LYING.** “Speak lies at one table” (v 27b) – “speak lies at the same table,” NKJV “speak lies to each other,” NASB “sit at the same table and lie to each other,” NIV “exchange lies,” NRSV “attempting to deceive each other.” NLT
- **DESTINED TO FALL.** “It shall not prosper” (27 c) – “it will not succeed,” NASB “but to no avail,” NIV “it shall not prosper,” ASV “it will come to nothing,” BBE “they will not have their way,” NJB “it will make no difference.” NLT
- **APPOINTMENT.** “At the time appointed” (27d) – “at the time fixed,” BBE “a fixed time.” Septuagint

Who but God can control such an admixture of people, emotions, intentions, and events? He alone can manage such a seeming hodgepodge, causing it to work together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28).

Here we are provided a glimpse of one small portion of the world, during one relatively brief period of time. Yet, this is an index that reveals how the Lord governs this world. Those who put their trust in Him will surely not be disappointed.

This is heaven’s view of things occurring upon the earth – things taking place among the dignitaries of this present evil world. On man’s side of the equation, every effort, even though often shrewd and calculating, is eventually frustrated, proving to be futile. On God’s side, determinations are made that cannot be resisted or neutralized. His will dominates, and His time stands firm. None can change what He determines. That, dear reader, is the kind of world we are presently occupying.

A RAISER OF TAXES FOR A FEW DAYS

“ 11:20 Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.”

In tracing the Grecian kings with which Israel would contend, the angel has just revealed the coming of Antiochus the Great. Compared by many to Alexander the Great, this was an imposing ruler. History says the following of him. “ Antiochus III, c. 242-187 ©, succeeded to the throne of the Seleucids in 223, when the kingdom was controlled by a powerful minister and rebellion was spreading in Iran. He defeated the rebels, rid himself of the minister, and conquered much of Phoenicia, Syria, and Palestine from the Ptolemies of Egypt. He had to withdraw, however, after losing the Battle of Raphia (217).

During the next few years Antiochus regained much of Anatolia, where a relative, Achaeus, had proclaimed himself king. In 213, Achaeus was captured in a dramatic plot and executed. Antiochus then embarked on a major expedition (212-206) to reconquer the lost eastern provinces, ruled by independent dynasties. Marching with little fighting as far as India, he received the nominal homage of the eastern rulers without imposing firm control.

Compared by flatterers to Alexander the Great, Antiochus set himself to regain all the land held by Seleucus I. After the death (205) of Ptolemy IV, he retook what he had lost at Raphia, then advanced as a self-styled liberator through Anatolia and crossed to Thrace, where he rebuilt (196) the old capital of Lysimachus. GROLIER ENCYCLOPEDIA 2003

Yet, like all earthly rulers, he was “removed” by God from the political landscape. The inspired commentary on this impressive ruler is this: “but he shall stumble and fall; and not be found” (v 19). Thus it is written, “Thus saith the LORD: Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD” (Jer 17:5). Whatever we may think of kings and kingdoms, or governors and governments, we do well not to trust in them. For in so doing, the heart departs from the Lord, who alone is “the Governor among the nations” and the “Lord of kings.” As simplistic as that may appear, we are living in a time when believers are being influenced to think otherwise,

IN HIS ESTATE

“Then shall stand up in his estate . . .” Other versions read, “there shall arise in his place,” NKJV “his successor,” NIV “his place will be taken,” BBE “there shall arise out of his root,” Septuagint “in his stead one shall rise,” NAB and “stood up on his station.” YLT

The word translated “estate” means a stand, base, office, or place. This refers to a role that is played, and a place into which one is set. When applied to kings, it emphasizes they have been “set up” by God (Dan 2:21), given authority by Him (Rom 13:1), and therefore are responsible to Him (Dan 2:47). From another vantage point, “estate” refers to a stewardship – an area of responsibility in which God is preeminent, even when it is undetected by men. The angels that fell, for example, “kept not their first estate” (Jude 1:6). They were expelled by God, who rules over all. They lost their assigned position.

In this text, the position of “king of the North” did not disappear when Antiochus the Great stumbled, fell, and was not found (11:19). God was not yet finished with Greece, and thus the fractured kingdom continued.

A RAISER OF TAXES

“ . . . a raiser of taxes . . .” Other versions read “imposes taxes,” NKJV “an oppressor,” NASB and “a tax collector.” NIV

A Kingdom Principle

It is the Spirit’s manner to associate specific kings with certain aspects of their dominion – particularly as they regard the outworking of Divine purpose. For example, Pharaoh is noted for his refusal to let God’s people go, and his consequent overthrow at the Red Sea (Ex 9:16; Psa 136:15). Sihon and Og were noted for their obstinance against the sojourn eying Israelites (Num 32:33; Deut 31:4). Cyrus is associated with the rebuilding of the Temple (2 Chron 36:23). Pilate and Herod are marked by their opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:27).

This kingdom principle is even seen in key individuals. Although long and divers lives may have been lived, people can be especially noted for one thing. For example, Cain murdered Abel (1 John 3:12), Achan coveted and took forbidden things (Josh 7:1), and Judas betrayed Jesus (Mark 3:19), Demas forsook Paul (2 Tim 4:10), a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets prepared a special room for Elisha (2 Kgs 4:10), and Onesiphorus refreshed Paul when he was in prison (2 Tim 1:16). There were also certain women, for example, who “ministered” to Jesus from their substance (Luke 8:3). These are things for which people were especially noted – things the Holy Spirit accentuates about them.

In my opinion, everyone will eventually be noted for something in particular – something that especially highlights their role in the Divine purpose. To put it another way, every person is in

some way serving the purpose of God – either for good or for evil. Paul put it this way: “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor” (2 Tim 2:20). Jesus spoke of the heavenly kingdom being like a net that gathered a multitude of fishes “of every kind.” Some were “good,” and some were “bad.” In the end, the “good” were “gathered into good vessels,” and the bad were cast away (Matt 13:47-48).

Again, Jesus spoke of the day of judgment, declaring that “all nations” would be judged upon the basis of how they treated His people (Matt 25:32-46). What other things they may or may not have done will be of little or no consequence compared with how they responded to the people of God.

What we have in this section of Daniel is a review of some “vessels of dishonor,” and “bad fish.” These are kings that distinguished themselves by hostilities toward the people of God. An historian might view their record quite differently, citing political, social, and military achievements for which they were responsible. However, that is not how heaven evaluates men.

What We Have Here

Now we come to the king who succeeded Antiochus the Great. What will he be noted for? How will the Spirit identify this Grecian dignitary? He was a “raiser of taxes.” He is noted for trying to wring more money out of the people – imposing undue burdens upon them. This is the distinguishing thing about his reign. This is the sort of thing for which Jehoiakim was noted: “And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaohnechoh” (2 Kgs 23:35). God does take note of such things!

Seleucus Philopator

The king of reference is Seleucus Philopator, the eldest son of Antiochus the Great, and seventh king of the Seleucid dynasty, Syria (187-175 B.C.). Because of the heavy debt incurred by his father Antiochus the Great, he devoted his rule to the gathering of monies to pay off that debt. Of his history records the following.

- “He was compelled by financial necessities, created in part by the heavy war-indemnity exacted by Rome , to pursue an ambitious policy and was assassinated by his minister Heliodorus.” Wikipedia Encyclopedia
- “Because of financial difficulties, created in part by the heavy war indemnity exacted by Rome, Seleucus was compelled to pursue a policy devoid of expensive adventures.” BRITANNICA 2003
- “his character was remarkably answered in Seleucus Philopater, the elder son of Antiochus the Great, who was a great oppressor of his own subjects, and exacted bundance of money from them ; and, when he was told he would thereby lose his friends, he said he knew no better friend he had than money. He likewise attempted to rob the temple at Jerusalem , which this seems especially to refer to.” MATTHEW HENRY
- “. . . the eldest son of Antiochus the great; who succeeded him, and was settled in his kingdom in his father’s room, and stood upon his basis; and might well be called a raiser of taxes, being not only a covetous man, and a lover of money above all things; and therefore laid heavy taxes on his subjects, to gratify his avarice; but was indeed obliged to it, to raise the thousand talents yearly to pay the Romans, which his father had laid himself under obligation to do; and this took up the whole life of this his successor; for as there were twelve thousand talents to pay, a thousand each year, and Seleucus reigned in all but twelve years at most, he did nothing but raise taxes yearly to pay this tribute .” JOHN GILL
- “The general policy of Seleucus towards the Jews, like that of his father (3, 2, 3, kai< Se>leukon) was conciliatory, as the possession of Palestine was of the highest importance in the prospect of an Egyptian war; and he undertook a large share of the expenses of the Temple service (ver. 3, 6). On one occasion, by the false representations of Simon (q.v.), a Jewish officer, he was induced to make an attempt to carry away the treasures deposited in the Temple by means of the same Heliodorus who murdered him. The attempt signally failed, but it does not appear that he afterwards showed any resentment against the Jews (4, 5, 6.); though his want of money to pay the enormous tribute due to the Romans may have compelled him to raise extraordinary revenues , for which cause he is described in Daniel as a “raiser of taxes” (11, 20; comp. Livy, 41, 19).” MCCLINTOK STRONG’S CYCLOPEDIA
- “Seleucus Philopator (B.C. 187-176) had a character the reverse of his father’s. He was no restless seeker for glory, but desired wealth and quietness. Among the Jews, however, he had a very evil reputation, for he sent an “exactor” — a mere tax-collector , Heliodorus — “to pass through the glory of the kingdom.” THE EXPOSITOR’S BIBLE
- The historian Jahn says, “The king, through a friend to the Jews, and though he had regularly made disbursements, according to the directions of his father, toward sustaining the expenses of the sacrifices at Jerusalem, determined to apply to his own use the treasures of the temple, for the annual payment of one thousand talents to the Romans had reduced his finances to a very low ebb. With the design, therefore, of replenishing his exhausted treasury, he sent Heliodorus to Jerusalem to plunder the temple .” Hebrews Commonwealth,” p. 255

Although history counts the activity of this king fairly insignificant, yet “the Scriptures of truth” throw the Divine spotlight on his taxing policy. The reason for this will be expounded in the following verses. His policy moved him to seek to exploit the people of God, and things that belonged to the Lord.

THE GLORY OF THE KINGDOM

“ . . . in the glory of the kingdom . . . ” Other versions read, “who imposes taxes on the glorious kingdom,” NKJV “the Jewel of his kingdom.” NASB

Here many of the linguists miss the point, being overly enamored of word meanings, and missing the spirit of the text. The “glory of the kingdom” was the land of the Jews. Remember, the things being revealed to Daniel are what will befall his people in the latter days. The angel is not providing a mere overview of Grecian political policies. The events now described derive their significance from their association with “the pleasant land,” or “glory of the kingdom.”

The meaning of this text is that this king sought to raise funds from within the holy land itself. His effort was most malicious. History records that he made an attempt to rob the Temple of God, in which much wealth was stored. Such actions are duly noted by the “Governor among the nations.”

I here provide a rather lengthy excerpt from the book of First Maccabees. It is to be understood that this is an historical record, and is not to be considered equal with Divine revelation. It does, however, provide a sense of what took place hundreds of years after Daniel’s prophecy, confirming the exacting detail of the word’s the angel brought to him. The purpose of God is, indeed, very detailed!

“Insomuch that Seleucus of Asia of his own revenues bare all the costs belonging to the service of the sacrifices. **3:4** But one Simon of the tribe of Benjamin, who was made governor of the temple, fell out with the high priest about disorder in the city. **3:5** And when he could not overcome Onias, he gat him to Apollonius the son of Thraseas, who then was governor of Celosyria and Phenice. **3:6** And told him that the treasury in Jerusalem was full of infinite sums of money, so that the multitude of their riches, which did not pertain to the account of the sacrifices, was innumerable, and that it was possible to bring all into the king’s hand. Now when Apollonius came to the king, and had showed him of the money whereof he was told, the king chose out Heliodorus his treasurer, and sent him with a commandment to bring him the foresaid money. **3:8** So forthwith Heliodorus took his journey; under a color of visiting the cities of Celosyria and Phenice, but indeed to fulfil the king’s purpose. **3:9** And when he was come to Jerusalem, and had been courteously received of the high priest of the city, he told him what intelligence was given of the money, and declared wherefore he came, and asked if these things were so indeed. **3:10** Then the high priest told him that there was such money laid up for the relief of widows and fatherless children: **3:11** And that some of it belonged to Hircanus son of Tobias, a man of great dignity, and not as that wicked Simon had misinformed: the sum whereof in all was four hundred talents of silver, and two hundred of gold: **3:12** And that it was altogether impossible that such wrongs should be done unto them, that had committed it to the holiness of the place, and to the majesty and inviolable sanctity of the temple, honored over all the world. **3:13** But Heliodorus, because of the king’s commandment given him, said, That in any wise it must be brought into the king’s treasury. **3:14** So at the day which he appointed he entered in to order this matter: wherefore there was no small agony throughout the whole city. **3:15** But the priests, prostrating themselves before the altar in their priests’ vestments, called unto heaven upon him that made a law concerning things given to he kept, that they should safely be preserved for such as had committed them to be kept. Then whoso had looked the high priest in the face, it would have wounded his heart: for his countenance and the changing of his color declared the inward agony of his mind. **3:17** For the man was so compassed with fear and horror of the body, that it was manifest to them that looked upon him, what sorrow he had now in his heart. **3:18** Others ran flocking out of their houses to the general supplication, because the place was like to come into contempt. **3:19** And the women, girt with sackcloth under their breasts, abounded in the streets, and the virgins that were kept in ran, some to the gates, and some to the walls, and others looked out of the windows. **3:20** And all, holding their hands toward heaven, made supplication. **3:21** Then it would have pitied a man to see the falling down of the multitude of all sorts, and the fear of the high priest being in such an agony. **3:22** They then called upon the Almighty Lord to keep the things committed of trust safe and sure for those that had committed them. **3:23** Nevertheless Heliodorus executed that which was decreed. FIRST MACABEES, CHAPTER 3

At the precise point at which this king sought to exploit the people of God, and plunder the Temple, he sealed his own doom. The land of the Jews, “the glory of the kingdom,” could have been the sanctifying element in his domain. The Syrian kings were given the opportunity to seek “the God of the Hebrews” (Ex 3:18). They could have declared Him to be the God of heaven and earth, as did Nebuchadnezzar and Darius (Dan 4:34-37; 6:25-27). Instead, they sought to exploit them. The king now being considered came to “the glory of the kingdom,” even seeking to rob the Temple of God. What will happen to such a wicked intruder?

WITHIN A FEW DAYS

“ . . . but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.” Other versions read, “In a few years,” NIV “after a short time,” BBE and “after a very brief reign.” NLT

A Few Days

Actually, this king reigned twelve years. Why does the angel use the words “within a few days?” There are two reasons. First, his reign was brief in comparison with that of his father, Antiochus the Great. Second, and of even more significance, his death took place shortly after his determination to rob the Temple of God. His reign would be cut short by God, and the accomplishments of his reign would have no measurable significance – only as a technical, and nearly meaningless, “blip” on the canvas of eternal purpose.

He Shall Be Destroyed

This king would be taken away violently – “destroyed.” It would not, however, be in a fierce battle, or some form of military conflict – “not in anger or in battle.” One version reads, “neither publicly nor in battle.” NJB

One has said of this man: “Seleucus Philopator, who peeled his subjects, and spared not to rob the temple. Within few days - For he lived not out the third part of his father's reign. Not in battle - Not by open force, but by poison.” JOHN WESLEY

The historian Jahn provides the following details. “In the eleventh year of his reign, he sent his only son Demetrius as hostage to Rome, and released his brother Antiochus, who had resided twelve years in that city. As the heir to the crown was now out of the way, Heliodorus sought to raise himself to the royal dignity, and for this purpose he destroyed the king by poison.” Hebrews Commonwealth,” ch. ix. Section 91.

Thus a reign of twelve years (187-175 B.C.) is briefly summarized by the angel in these words: “In his stead one shall arise who will send a tax collector through the glorious kingdom, but he shall soon be destroyed, though not in conflict or in battle.” NAB

Remember, this is heaven’s view of things occurring on the earth. It is placed against the backdrop of “eternal purpose,” in which the will of God is preeminent, and the people with whom He has identified Himself taking precedence over all other peoples. Also, the coming of the Messiah, the time in which God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed (Dan 2:44) overshadows all other events and kingdoms.

PERSPECTIVE

Thus, we have an example true godly perspective. When evaluating the events taking place among men and kingdoms, we must view them through the window of Divine intent. We must ever remember that “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (Psa 24:1). In every age it is true, “God reigneth over the heathen” (Psa 47:8) – whether they are Babylonians, Persians, Grecians, or Romans. God punishes “the kings of the earth upon the earth” (Isa 24:21), not allowing their blasphemous deeds to go unrequited. Whether it is Pharaoh, Sennacherib, Seleucus Philopator, or Herod the Great, they are held in strict account by God – and God is faithful to remember His land, His City, and His people. This is all the more true of those who are in His Son, having been joined to Him, and made partakers of the Divine nature.

Thus the Scriptures testify to these two great realities.

- “The Lord will not forsake His people or cast off His inheritance” (Psa 94:14).
- God is “able to abase” those who walk in pride (Dan 4:37).

Circumstances may seem to contradict these affirmations, but they that “wait upon the Lord” will find them to be true. Thus it is written, “If God be for us, who can be against us” (Rom 8:31).

A VILE PERSON OBTAINS THE KINGDOM BY FLATTERIES

“ 21 And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.”

The prophecy of God’s people under the reign of the Grecians continues. Upon the sudden and non-military death of Seleucus Philopator another king rises, taking his place, for he had no successor. This is the same king already mentioned in the eighth chapter. There his beginning is referred to as “a little horn.” In that passage, the following is said of him.

- He came forth from the four horns of the “he goat,” who depicted the Grecian Empire (8:8-9a).
- He “waxed exceedingly great,” and pushed his way into “the pleasant land,” which was Israel’s dwelling place (8:9b).
- He waxed great, even casting down some of the “host of heaven,” Trampling them, and moving against those who were aligned with the God of heaven (8:10).
- Through him, God’s daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of the sanctuary plundered and cast down (8:11).
- Because of the transgression of Israel, he was given power to cast truth down to the ground, and prosper in his own wicked way (8:12).
- Under him, both “the sanctuary and the host” were trampled underfoot (8:13).
- He was a king “of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences,” having no fear of God or regard for man (8:23).
- Operating in a power that was not his own, but was delegated to him, he “shall destroy the mighty and holy people,” launching an aggressive initiative against them (8:24).
- His rule would be one of craftiness and subtlety (8:25a).
- He would “magnify himself in his heart” (8:25b).
- He would “destroy many” (8:25c).
- He would stand up against “the Prince of princes” (8:25d).
- He would be destroyed, but not with human power (8:25e).

Now the angel extends his comments on this wicked king – one who was revealed after the fall of Alexander (the “notable horn that was broken”), and after the rise of the “four notable ones” that rose up in Alexander’s place (8:8). It is as though a spiritual magnifying glass is being placed over the Intertestamental period, providing details that confirm the Sovereignty of God and His care for His people. Whereas Antiochus Epiphanes was formerly said to have sprung up from among the four horns of the he goat, we have now seen that his identity is narrowed down to the kings of the North and the South – the two kingdoms of Syria and Egypt.

In a sense, we are witnessing the death-throes of the Grecian empire. At its root, the aggression against the people of God is because of their own transgressions, which were brought to the full (8:12,23). However, at the next level, it was provoked by “spiritual wickedness in high places.” Operating under Satan, they were seeking to thwart the coming of the promised Savior into the world.

A VILE PERSON

“And in his estate shall stand up a vile person . . .” Other versions read, “in his place a despicable person will arise,” NASB “He will be succeeded by a contemptible person,” NIV “There shall stand up in his place one despised,” DOUAY and “In his place will rise a wretch.” NJB

A “vile person” is one worthless and disdained, or looked down upon. The sons of Eli are described as men who “made themselves vile” (1 Sam 3:13). A “vile person” is said to “speak villany” (wickedness), and “work iniquity” (Isa 32:6). Such a person is one in whom iniquity is enthroned, and its expression is aggressive.

In this case, the vileness of the ruler will be measured by his conduct toward the people of God.

THEY WILL NOT GIVE THE HONOR OF THE KINGDOM

“ . . . to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom , , , ” Other versions read, “to whom they will not give the honor of royalty,” NKJV “on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred,” NASB “who has not been given the honor of royalty,” NIV and “on whom royal majesty has not been conferred.” NRSV

The idea is that Antiochus Epiphanes did not come to the throne through a normal process – i.e., either by succession, or royal appointment. Following the assassination of Seleucus Philopator, the rightful heir of the throne was his son, Demetrius. Antiochus was the younger brother of Seleucus, and other son of Antiochus the Great. He is one of the two sons of the king of the North (Seleucus Callinicus), who were stirred up against the “king of the South,” or Egypt (11:10).

History records the following concerning the ascension of Antiochus Epiphanes to the throne. “. . . also called Antiochus Epiphanes (the Mad) Seleucid king of the Hellenistic Syrian kingdom who reigned from 175 to 164 BC. As a ruler he was best known for his encouragement of Greek culture and institutions. His attempts to suppress Judaism brought on the Wars of the Maccabees .” BRITANNICA 2003 “Antiochus IV was the Seleucid king whose attempts to introduce pagan rites in Jerusalem led to the revolt of the Maccabees and the creation of a Jewish state. The son of Antiochus III, he had to defeat the usurper Heliodorus before taking power in 175. GROLLIERSs 2003

McClintok and Strong’s Cyclopedia of Bible Knowledge says the following about this man. “ANTIOCHUS (IV) EPIPHANES (Ejpfanh, illustrious; comp. Michaelis on 1 Maccabees 1:10, and Eckhel, Doctr. num. I, 3, 223; nicknamed Epiphanes, Ejpimanh, madman , Athen. 10:438 sq.; on coins Theos, Qeo .god, see Frohlich, Annal. tab. 6, 7), a Seleucid king of Syria, second son of Antiochus the Great (Appian, Syr. 45; 1 Maccabees 1:11), ascended the throne on the death of his brother, Seleucus Philopator (on his enumeration, the 11th of the Seleucidae, Daniel 7:8, 24; see Lengerke, Daniel, p. 318 sq.), B.C. 175 (see Wernsdorf, De fide libr. Macc. p. 28 sq.), and attained an evil notoriety for his tyrannical treatment of the Jews (comp. Daniel 7:8 sq.), who have described him (in the second Book of the Maccabees) as barbarous in the extreme (see Eichhorn, Apokr. p. 265). He had been given as a hostage to the Romans (B.C. 188) after his father’s defeat at Magnesia. In B.C. 175 he was released by the intervention of his brother Seleucus, who substituted his own son Demetrius in his place. Antiochus was at Athens when Seleucus was assassinated by Heliodorus. He took advantage of his position, and, by the assistance of Eumenes and Attalus, easily expelled Heliodorus, who had usurped the crown, and himself “obtained the kingdom by flatteries” (Daniel 11:21; comp. Liv.41:20), to the exclusion of his nephew Demetrius (Daniel 7:8).

Now the angel shines the light of heavenly illumination upon this despot, showing his role in the latter days of the Grecian Empire – particularly as it regards the land of Israel and the people of God.

HE SHALL COME IN PEACEABLY

“ . . . but he shall come in peaceably . . . ” Other versions read, “come in a time of tranquility,” NASB “when the people feel secure,” NIV and “without warning.” NRSV

Antiochus Epiphanes did not seize the throne forcibly, or by military might. He rather took it by craft and stealth. One commentator provides the following concerning this effort. “But he quietly left Rome — while Demetrius, his nephew, the true heir to the crown, remained there; came to Athens, and learned what was the state of things in Syria, where Heliodorus had usurped the authority; made an agreement with the king of Pergamos to aid him, and, by the assistance of a part of the Syrians who were opposed to the usurper Heliodorus, deprived him of the authority, and himself took possession of the crown. No one seemed to suspect that this was his aim, or to doubt that his object was to remove an usurper that his nephew might be placed on the throne.” BARNES

OBTAIN THE KINGDOM BY FLATTERIES

“ . . . and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.” Other versions read, “seize the kingdom by intrigue,” NKJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV “by fair words,” BBE “by fraud,” DOUAY “by deceitful ways,” Septuagint and “through trickery.” TNK

These were deceptive and cunning methods that employed words and promises more than military might and power. He did, in fact, seize the kingdom by cunning stratagem rather than a military coup, which is a frequent Satanic method.

Prior to his reign, Antiochus himself was a prisoner of Rome, the kingdom that was lurking in the background, waiting to replace Greece. Antiochus was a hostage in Rome for his father, who was defeated by the Romans. Using stealth, he moved his brother, Seleucus IV to exchange his own son (Demetrius, the rightful heir) for himself. Of this, history records the following. “Antiochus was the third son of Antiochus III the Great. After his father’s defeat by the Romans in 190–189, he served as hostage for his father in Rome from 189 to 175, where he learned to admire Roman institutions and policies. His brother, King Seleucus IV, exchanged him for Demetrius, the son of Seleucus; and after Seleucus was murdered by Heliodorus, a usurper, Antiochus in turn ousted him.” BRITANNICA 2003

McClintok and Strong's Cyclopaedia of Biblical Knowledge, says of Antiochus obtaining the kingdom. "In B.C. 175 he was released by the intervention of his brother Seleucus, who substituted his own son Demetrius in his place. Antiochus was at Athens when Seleucus was assassinated by Heliodorus. He took advantage of his position, and, by the assistance of Eumenes and Attalus, easily expelled Heliodorus, who had usurped the crown, and himself "obtained the kingdom by flatteries" (Daniel 11:21; comp. Liv. 41:20), to the exclusion of his nephew Demetrius (Daniel 7:8)."

What the angel referred to as taking away the daily sacrifice, defiling the sanctuary, and overthrowing a heavenly host, history records as the following. "Antiochus' hellenizing policies brought him into conflict with the prosperous Oriental temple organizations, and particularly with the Jews. Since Antiochus III's reign the Jews had enjoyed extensive autonomy under their high priest. They were divided into two parties, the orthodox Hasideans (Pious Ones) and a reform party that favored Hellenism. For financial reasons Antiochus supported the reform party and, in return for a considerable sum, permitted the high priest, Jason, to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem and to introduce the Greek mode of educating young people. In 172, for an even bigger tribute, he appointed Menelaus in place of Jason. In 169, however, while Antiochus was campaigning in Egypt, Jason conquered Jerusalem—with the exception of the citadel—and murdered many adherents of his rival Menelaus. When Antiochus returned from Egypt in 167 he took Jerusalem by storm and enforced its Hellenization. The city forfeited its privileges and was permanently garrisoned by Syrian soldiers ." BRITANNICA 2003

Thus, through shrewdness, flatteries, and deceptions, the reign of Antiochus begins. However, this will not be the end of the story. Every advantage is given to him in order to fulfill his wicked will. This will only serve to bring glory to God when he is abruptly brought down. It is God's manner to let the wicked excel prior to casting them down.

SOMETHING TO LEARN

There is a valuable lesson to be learned from this text. Ponder the surroundings in which the people of God find themselves. They are surrounded on all sides by political opportunists. They are being bludgeoned by wars and rumors of wars. Not only will they be subject to military force, but to shrewd deception as well. How will the wisdom of this world be able to protect them in such circumstances? How will they be able to muster armed forces sufficient to consistently repel their enemies? If God does not protect them, who will?

The people of God today are in much the same circumstance. There are August powers and unparalleled deceivers aligned against them. They cannot hope to confront such forces in the energy of the flesh. Additionally, they have a mandate from heaven to "resist the devil," and to "stand" against his wiles (1 Pet 5:8-9; Eph 6:10-11). They cannot make "friends" with the world, for that will cause them to be the enemies of God (James 4:4). They are admonished, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong!" (1 Cor 16:13).

It is not possible for this to be accomplished apart from faith. The victory that overcomes the world is faith, not might! Faith, not wisdom! Faith, not brilliant planning! Faith, not The words that are being revealed to Daniel will fuel faith and ignite hope. They will enable the people of God to survive assaults from seemingly impossible odds!

BROKEN WITH THE ARMS OF A FLOOD

" 22 And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant."

The angel continues outlining the circumstances through which Daniel's people will pass – and survive! The kingdoms of this world will not be able to topple the kingdom of God. Rather, it is His kingdom that will utterly decimate all of them.

Although Antiochus Epiphanes seized the kingdom by craft, he would have to maintain it by force. The kingdoms of this world cannot remain in a perpetual season of peace. They are like the "troubled sea" that continually casts up mire and dirt (Isa 57:20), and "foaming out their own shame" (Jude 1:13).

Our first exposure to this wicked king emphasized his assault against the people of God themselves.

In this revelation, a different view is presented of this opponent of the people of God. His character is accentuated – “a vile person.” The means by which he gained the throne are underscored – “to whom they did not give the honor of the kingdom.” That is, he did not ascend the throne through a normal process, as did the other kings. Rather, he seized the kingdom by craft. Now we will see the rapidity and seeming invincibility with which this king dominates.

THE ARMS OF A FLOOD

“And with the arms of a flood . . .” Other versions read, “with the force of a flood,” NKJV “overflowing forces,” NASB and “an overwhelming arm.” NIV

The word “arms,” or “arm,” denotes power or strength. The word “flood” depicts a rapid inundation, against which it is impossible to stand.

Here the angel moves to the final conquest of Antiochus over Egypt, the kingdom of the South. Remember, these two kingdoms (Syria and Egypt) were the final divisions of the once-great kingdom of Grecia. It is as though Antiochus is attempting to gather the kingdom into a single powerful entity once again, as it was under Alexander the Great. However, “the Scriptures of Truth” have already recorded the outcome of the divided kingdom of Greece. “Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his (Alexander, the “notable horn”) power” (Dan 8:22). As powerful as Antiochus may have appeared, the powers of Greece were in a state of appointed deterioration.

OVERFLOWN FROM BEFORE HIM

“ . . . shall they be overflown from before him and shall be broken . . .” Other versions read, “they shall be swept away from before him,” NKJV and “flooded away before him, and shattered,” NASB and “crushed.” NJB

The sudden and devastating power of Antiochus’ initiative is described most vividly. “He undertook four campaigns against Egypt, in order to possess himself of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia, which he had claimed since Cleopatra’s death (see the ANTIOCHUS preceding); the first B.C. 171, the second B.C. 170 (2 Maccabees 5:1; 1 Maccabees 1:17 sq.), the third B.C. 169, the fourth B.C. 168. On his return from the second of these campaigns, in the prosecution of which he had overrun the greater part of Egypt , and taken prisoner the Egyptian king, Ptolemy Philometor (comp. Daniel 11:26), he indulged in the harshest manner of proceedings in Jerusalem , on occasion of the above shameful quarrel among the priests. SEE MENELAUS, which had been carried on by open force of arms (comp. Joseph. Ant. 12, 5, 1), and vented his rage especially on the temple, which he plundered and desecrated with great bloodshed (1 Maccabees 1:20-42; 2 Maccabees 5:1-23). Being checked by the Romans in his fourth campaign against Egypt, and compelled in a very peremptory manner to retire (Liv. 45:12; Polyb. 29:11; Appian, Syr. 66; Diod. Sic. Exc. Vatic. 31:2; comp. Daniel 11:29 sq. he detached (B.C. 167) a body of troops to Jerusalem, who took the city by assault, slaughtered a large part of the inhabitants, and gave up the city to a general sack (1 Maccabees 1:30 sq.; 2 Maccabees 5:24 sq.; comp. Daniel 11:31 sq.). The Jewish worship in the Temple was utterly broken up and abolished (1 Maccabees 1:43 sq.). At this time he availed himself of the assistance of the ancestral enemies of the Jews (1 Maccabees 4:61; 5:3 sq.; Daniel 11:41). The decrees then followed which have rendered his name infamous. The Greek religion was forcibly imposed upon the Jews, and there was set up, for the purpose of desecrating (Diod. Sic. Eclog. 34, 1) and defiling the Temple, on the 15th of Kisleu, the “abomination of desolation” [q.v.] (Daniel 11:31; 12:11; 1 Maccabees 1:57), i.e. probably a little idolatrous shrine (Joseph. Ant. 12, 5, 4) on the altar of burnt-offerings; the first victim was sacrificed to Jupiter Olympius, on the 25th of the same month.” MCCLINTOK AND STRONG

Antiochus’ final conquest of Egypt, therefore led to his flagrant abuses of the people and worship of Almighty God. It was a sort of prelude to the atrocities committed against the Jews. It is as though his victories bolstered his wicked pride, and whetted his appetite for the oppression of the people of God.

To Antiochus, the conquest of Jerusalem was incidental, with the greater exploit being that of Egypt. In heaven, the conquest of Egypt was secondary to the overrunning of Jerusalem, which had drawn the attention of God. Power had been given to Antiochus by the only One who can give power (Rom 13:1). The manner in which he used this power confirmed he was, in fact, a “vile person.”

If it had not been for the prophecy given to Daniel, those living in the time of “the little horn” would have lost all hope. Judging from appearance, Antiochus Epiphanes seemed invincible, sweeping over foes like a torrential flood. However, that was only according to appearance.

A THOUGHT

Here was a period of time during which political upheaval and the oppression of the people of God was present. There were still people of faith who had to live in these times, trusting in God and not yielding to unbelief and despair . These were things that would befall Daniel’s people (10:13) – who were primarily God’s people. The land that would be invaded would be “the pleasant land” (8:9), the “glorious land” (11:16) – “the LORD’S land” (Hos 9:3). The Temple that would be sacked was His sanctuary.

There is a theological stance that imagines such things cannot take place. Novices will cite Scriptures that appear to indicate no such things can happen to those aligned with God.

- “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD.” (Isa 54:17)
- “For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.” (Psa 32:6)
- “He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.” (Psa 91:4-7)
- “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (2 Tim 4:18)

Such texts are not intended to suggest the people of God pass through this world without experiencing staggering unpleasantries. There are higher purposes being served than the personal comfort of the people of God. That is why He says, “When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa 43:2). There IS such a thing as going THROUGH the flood and the fire – of enduring unspeakably atrocities. Yet, they will have no ultimate, or eternal, affect upon the saints.

Even if this was not stated, our knowledge of the history of the saints should have led us to this conclusion. Ponder what the most favored of God’s people have endured. Some continued to live in the world for a time, and some did not.

- Abel was murdered (Gen 4:8).
- Joseph was oppressed by his brothers, and by a lengthy imprisonment (Gen 37:20-29; 39:20-23).
- The Israelites were grievously oppressed in Egypt (Ex 5:14).
- The newborn children of the Israelites were consigned to death (Ex 1:22; Acts 7:19).
- David was slandered, experienced fear on every side, his enemies took counsel against him, and devised ways to kill him (Psa 31:13).
- Wicked Jezebel “cut off the prophets of the Lord” (1 Kgs 18:4).
- Zechariah the prophet was stoned to death in “the court of the house of the Lord” (2 Chron 24:24).
- Job endured unparalleled assaults from the devil himself (Job 1:7-20; 2:2-8).
- Jeremiah was thrown into a pit, and sunk down into its mire (Jer 38:6).
- Jehoiakim the king killed Urijah the priest with the sword, and cast his body into “the graves of the common people” (Jer 26:23).
- John the Baptist was beheaded (Matt 14:10-11).
- James the Apostle, brother of James, was slain with the sword by Herod (Acts 12:2).

- Stephen was stoned to death by his own countrymen (Acts 7:58-59).
- Paul was beaten with stripes five times, three times with rods, and was stoned once, also enduring three shipwrecks, a day and a night in the deep, and perils everywhere he went (2 Cor 11:23-27).
- In his old age, John the Apostle was exiled on the Isle of Patmos (Rev 1:9).

Yet, none of the wicked achieved what they desired in their oppressions. Not only do the righteous live on with the Lord, their influence remains as well, and their works do follow them. Let us remove spiritual naivety far from us. God has said far too much on this subject for His people to expect every opponent to topple before them.

One of the things we are to derive from this text, is that God always has the last word! There is no such thing as an enemy of God's people that the Lord will not bring down. As wicked as Antiochus Epiphanes was, he was not an exception to this rule.

A Word to Teachers

The servants of God are never to get caught up in the doctrinal fads of the day. However, our day appears to be one of especial religious delusion. It is fashionable for men to speak of a coming world leader in such a way as to cause fear and trembling among believers. They belch out words about a one world government, a global despot, and a dreadful mark – doing so in such a way as to induce fear and obscure faith. While the presence of such things is not to be questioned, it is certainly not to be feared. With examples like Cain, Job, Stephen, Paul, etc., it is a sin of the greatest magnitude to teach the people of God they will be suddenly wafted away from all threat and harm. Such doctrines fly in the face of great bodies of revelation, and must not be tolerated among the saints.

Let faithful preachers and teachers proclaim the ultimate overthrow of political and spiritual despots. Tell the people of God they will at last judge the world (1 Cor 6:2-3), and that their enemies will stand before them to acknowledge that Jesus loved the saints (Rev 3:9). Declare the eternal triumph of Christ and those who trust in Him, not temporal successes of their enemies!

Even in the text before us, the angel has been accenting the Sovereignty of God and the vulnerability and temporality of all of His enemies . We must not fail to see these things.

ALSO THE PRINCE OF THE COVENANT

“ . . . yea, also the prince of the covenant.” Other versions read, “the ruler of the agreement,” BBE “head of the covenant,” Septuagint “covenant leader,” TNK and “leader of the covenant.” YLT

There is a diversity of opinion concerning the identity of “the prince of the covenant.” Some think it was Judas Maccabaeus. Jerome Others see this as Onias the high priest, Seleucus Philopater (Antiochus' brother), and Trypho, a peer in the realm of Egypt. JOHN GILL Some also believe it was Demetrius (Seleucus Philopator's son and rightful heir), MATTHEW HENRY

In my judgment, the “covenant” of reference is the one made by Onias the high priest with Ptolemy and Cleopatra (referenced in Lesson 34, pages 5-6). This had to do with Onias building a temple in Egypt, which he affirmed was prophesied by Isaiah (Isa 19:20-21).

Although I would not be contentious about identifying this “prince,” I make this choice because the revelation regards what will befall Daniel's people (10:13). It seems more proper, therefore, to favor a view that keeps the Jewish people in the prominence.

As an historical fact, Antiochus did displace Onias as high priest. Of that displacement, the following is recorded in Second Maccabees. “7 But after the death of Seleucus, when Antiochus, called Epiphanes, took the kingdom, Jason the brother of Onias labored underhand to be high priest, 8 Promising unto the king by intercession three hundred and threescore talents of silver, and of another revenue eighty talents: 9 Beside this, he promised to assign an hundred and fifty more, if he might have licence to set him up a place for exercise, and for the training up of youth in the fashions of the heathen, and to write them of Jerusalem by the name of Antiochians. 34 Wherefore Menelaus, taking Andronicus apart, prayed, him to get Onias into his hands; who being persuaded thereunto, and coming to Onias in deceit, gave him his right hand with oaths; and though

he were suspected by him, yet persuaded he him to come forth of the sanctuary: whom forthwith he shut up without regard of justice. 35 For the which cause not only the Jews, but many also of other nations, took great indignation, and were much grieved for the unjust murder of the man.” 2 Maccabees 4

The Historical Point

The point being made is that Antiochus Epiphanes would overwhelm Egypt, breaking the power of its ruler, and voiding the covenant that had been made prior to him. Even though the king of Egypt sought alliances with other countries to ward off the attacks of Antiochus, he was not able to stand before him. No agreements, however potentially effective they were considered, could stop the overthrow of Egypt.

THE REAL POINT

However the student wishes to approach this matter of identifying “the prince of the covenant,” care must be taken not to be moved away from the basic message of the heavenly messenger. No effort of the enemies of God will ultimately succeed. It may involve military power, unparalleled shrewdness and subtlety, and the making of seemingly successful covenants – but it will be in vain. In my understanding, this is the primary message that is being brought home to Daniel. The people of God may be subjected to all manner of atrocities and oppression. Yet, the devil’s cause will not triumph over that of the Lord.

God had made certain commitments to Israel, and the message of the angel is confirming they will hold firm for all who trust the Lord.

- “And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel .” (1 Kgs 6:13)
- “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee . Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me.” (Isa 49:15-16)
- “Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art My servant: I have formed thee; thou art My servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me. ” (Isa 44:21)
- “Is Ephraim My dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him , saith the LORD.” (Jer 31:20)
- “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever . Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD .” (Jer 31:35-37)

Daniel knew of the Jews being oppressed by Nebuchadnezzar. He was told of the coming oppression of Persian principalities and Grecian kings. That oppression would be awful, yet it would not be decisive, nor would it void the promises of God. All of heaven leans over the ramparts of heaven to behold the marvelous working of the Lord. Now an angel brings a message that will move Daniel to do the same.

God has frequently affirmed the futility of initiatives against His will and people. Especially in these days, it is good to fill our mind with these words, and muse upon them within our hearts.

- “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD: though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.” (Prov 16:5)
- “So are the paths of all that forget God; and the hypocrite’s hope shall perish: Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider’s web. He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure.” (Job 8:13-15)
- “And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.” (Isa 13:11).
- “And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.” (Isa 2:17)

- “And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled.” (Isa 5:15)
- “And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.” (Jer 50:32)
- “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” (Psa 9:17)
- “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” (1 Cor 1:19)
- “And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.” (2 Thess 2:9)

There is no question about the ultimate destiny of the wicked, and of all those who oppress the people of God, or come against what He has ordained. Under both covenants, considerable has been said about this. There is no room for doubt. Even while they appear to be prospering, God has actually placed them in “slippery places,” and their fall will come very soon (Psa 73:18). Thus, the political power that is now being expounded, will end very soon.

STRONG WITH A SMALL PEOPLE

“ 23 And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.”

It should be apparent that the heavenly messenger sees things with much more clarity than mere mortals. Notice the confidence with which he speaks, and the sureness of his word. There is no possibility that what he is saying will not come to pass. Even though the mist of vagueness may surround some of the details of this prophecy, yet there is God, who will certainly bring it to pass for His own glory, and for the ultimate good of His people. That is the impact this word must have upon our hearts.

THE LEAGUE MADE WITH HIM

“And after the league made with him . . .” Other versions read, “after an alliance made with him,” NASB “after an agreement with him,” NIV “after friendships,” DOUAY and “after they join themselves to him.” YLT

The conflict between Syria and Egypt (the North and the South) was over the possession of Coelo-Syria and Palestine. This was the cause of continual contention and war. In the original dividing of the single Empire of Greece into four sections, the original kings of the North (Seleucus I Nicator), and the South (Ptolemy I Lager Soter) contended that these sections were under their control. History records the following.

“The great subject of contention between the kings of Syria and Egypt was the possession of Coelo-Syria and Palestine . This they often endeavored to settle by conquest as each of them claimed that in the original partition of the empire of Alexander this portion of the empire fell to himself; and often they endeavored to settle it by treaty. Consequently this region was constantly passing from one to the other, and was also the seat of frequent wars. The “league” here referred to seems to have been that respecting this country — file successive promises which had been made to the king of Egypt that Coelo-Syria and Palestine should be made over to him. These provinces had been secured to Ptolemy Lagus by the treaty made 301 B.C., and they had been again pledged by Antiochus the Great, in dowry, when his daughter Cleopatra should be made queen of Egypt.” Jahn, Hebrews Commonwealth, p. 260.

Now, as is characteristic of the wicked, Antiochus Epiphanes is not willing to abide by any previous agreement. The idea of this verse is that Antiochus went about to fulfill his own diabolical agenda under the guise of friendship and agreement. Some believe the “league” refers to feigned friendship with the king of the South, Ptolemy Philometor. CALVIN Others see the “league” as the agreement originally made by Antiochus the Great, when he gave Coelo-Syria and Palestine to Ptolemy V, as a dowry for his marriage to Cleopatra. BARNES Still others are of the opinion it refers to an agreement made with Jason, the high priest he put in the place of Onias, for a large sum of money given to him by Jason. BENSON

I am persuaded that it is not profitable to pursue the specific identity of the one involved in this “league” with Antiochus Epiphanes. Historically, there are several who fit into the revealed scenario. At this point, it is enough to say the agreement somehow involved the people of God and their land, for that is the matter the angel is opening to Daniel.

HE SHALL WORK DECEITFULLY

“ . . . he shall work deceitfully . . .” Other versions read, “he will practice deception,” NASB “act deceitfully,” NIV and “will be working falsely.” BBE

Within the framework of peace and friendship, treachery will be in this man’s heart, and his own agenda will be zealously sought. While a covenant has been made, he will act in contradiction of that covenant, seeking to gain the whole of Egypt for himself. Craftily he will refuse to comply with its conditions.

When, for example, Ptolemy Philometor reached the age of fourteen (he was made king at five), he was formerly invested with the government. His ascension to the throne was honored by several countries, who sent congratulatory representatives to him. Under the pretext of a genuine care for the young king, Antiochus also sent a representative to the coronation. The book of Second Maccabees refers to this. “Now when Apollonius the son of Menestheus was sent into Egypt for the coronation of king Ptolemy Philometor, Antiochus, understanding him not to be well affected to his affairs, provided for his own safety: whereupon he came to Joppa, and from thence to Jerusalem.” 2 Maccabees 4:21

The Art of Deception

The more a person is involved in deception, the further they are from God, and the more closely they are aligned with the devil. Deception is nothing less than a lie dressed in the feigned attire of verity. Deception is also the mother of the lie, which seeks to break down any resistance to treachery under the guise of friendship. Therefore Satan is called “the father” of the lie, and the one who “deceives the whole world” (John 8:44; Rev 12:9).

The success of deception is seen in the history of mankind. The very first time Satan employed deception on the earth, he successfully brought down a person who was morally spotless (1 Tim 2:14). Since that time, there has only been a single person who did not fall into the category of “deceived” (Tit 3:3) – the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we have a king who is aligned against Israel working “deceitfully.” How will Israel be able to survive? In his scheming, Satan no doubt thought this would be an excellent way to bring this nation down – a nation he knew was destined to bring forth the “Seed” God had told him would bruise his head.

However, as we will see, deceiving and crafty Antiochus was in God’s world, and was well within the perimeter of Divine control. This is the God of whom it is said, “The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect” (Psa 33:10).

STRONG WITH A SMALL PEOPLE

“ . . . for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people.” Other versions read, “gain power with a small force of people,” NASB “with only a few people he will rise to power,” NIV “take up arms suddenly with a small force,” BBE “shall overcome with a small people,” DOUAY “despite the smallness of his following, grow ever stronger,” NJB and “With a mere handful of followers, he will become strong.” NLT

Within the framework of seeming peace, and operating with deceptiveness, Antiochus became strong suddenly, without any association being made with a violent overthrow or massive military force. The smallness of the forces he used would not incite any suspicion, or move Egyptian dignitaries into a defensive posture. The historian Jahn says, “with a small body of troops he made himself master of Memphis, and of all Egypt as far as Alexandria, almost without striking a blow.” Hebrews Commonwealth, p. 263; Compare Diod. Sic. xxvi. 75, 77; Jos. “Ant.” xii. 5, 2. It is also said of him, “. . . he went into the heart of Syria with a small number of men at first, and gathered together a large army; or into Phoenicia with a handful of men, where he ingratiated himself into the affections of the people by words and gifts, and became strong; or he went up into Egypt accompanied only with a few, lest, the Egyptians should be suspicious of him; but these it is said were valiant men, whom he placed in the forts of Egypt, and so became master of it, which is an instance of his deceitful working; and Sutorius, an ancient historian, as quoted by Jerome, says that he subdued Egypt to himself with a very small number of people.” JOHN GILL

Now the meaning of this passage becomes even more clear. Antiochus entered into various areas of the kingdom with but a few men, thus arousing no suspicion of any malicious intent. Then he gathered forces from within those areas, increasing his militia. Thus he entered peaceably, but not with peaceable intentions.

AN APPLICATION

I cannot leave this verse without observing that Satan is still employing these same tactics. Actually, those who are aligned with Satan, making a place for him, take upon themselves his character. That is why Jesus called Peter “Satan,” when he took Jesus aside and “began to rebuke Him” because He has spoken of dying. “This shall not be unto Thee,” Peter said. Jesus replied, “Get thee behind me Satan: thou art an offence unto Me” (Matt 16:22-23).

The fact that those who yield to the devil become like him is also confirmed in the much disputed prophecies against the king of Babylon (Isa 14:4-15). Isaiah says to this king, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer . . .” Satan was at work in that king, and thus he was addressed as though he was Satan himself.

The same type of thing is seen in Ezekiel’s denunciation of the “king of Tyrus.” He also had yielded to the devil, and had therefore acquired his traits. To him the prophet said, “Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God: every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God: thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire” (Ezek 28:13-14).

Just as Satan was working through the king of Babylon and the king of Tyrus, so he was working through Antiochus Epiphanes. That is why this ruler was so shrewd.

Once again, I pose the question: How will Israel (Daniel’s people) be able to survive such opposition?

HE SHALL DO WHAT HIS FATHERS DID NOT DO

“ 24 He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time.”

Like a malignant growth, the influence and power of this “vile person” begins to expand. When once a person sees the power and rule of God, it is sometimes difficult to account for the rapid spread of iniquity. Unable to perceive such things, some have exaggerated the will of man, and conceived of a God that is withdrawn from the affairs of this world. Their understanding is too small.

The manner of the Divine rule upon the earth is profitable to consider. He rules in the midst of seeming chaos, trouble, and agitation. While, apart from faith, men are not able to see this, it is quite clear to the heavenly hosts. In the year king Uzziah died, when all seemed but loss, Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up. Near His throne were some majestic six-winged seraphs. As they flew around the throne they cried out to one another, “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory ” (Isa 6:3).

However, that is not what it looked like to men. Uzziah had been a gifted military man, preparing “for all the army shields, spears, helmets, body armor, bows and sling stones. And in Jerusalem he made engines of war invented by skillful men to be on the towers and on the corners, for the purpose of shooting arrows and great stones. Hence his fame spread afar, for he was marvelously helped until he was strong” (2 Chr 26:14-15). However, when he was strong, his heart was lifted up and he transgressed against the Lord. He took upon himself to enter the Temple and offer incense upon the altar of incense. When he was rebuked for his action, he became enraged. While the anger was welling up in him, God struck him with leprosy in his forehead, and he remained a leper until the day he died (2 Chron 26:16-19).

His son Jotham reigned in his stead, and more wickedness broke out. While he himself did not go into the Temple as his father did, “the people did yet corruptly” (2 Chron 27:1-3). It surely did not look like the earth was filled with God’s glory!

Yet, when Isaiah saw the Lord, he heard holy seraphs affirm, “the whole earth is full of His glory!” While men did not see it, God was at work in all of the affairs of men. There was not a despot in the entire world that was operating on his own, or who was not under the immediate control of God. Nor, indeed, was there a single believer under the heavens who was not seen, heard, upheld, and cared for by the Lord!

With these things in mind, the present reign of the Lord Jesus becomes more clear. In the 110 th Psalm, the prophet speaks of the coming Messiah, referring to Him being seated at the right hand of God. He is seated in expectation of His enemies being made His footstool. What is more, He is actually reigning in the very presence of His enemies. Here is what that Psalm says, “A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of Thine enemies ” (Psa 110:1-2).

Of What Relevance Is This?

To some, this might appear to be a theological bypath – but it is not. The message that is being brought to Daniel is precisely this – that God is ruling in the midst of His enemies! We must not fail to see this! What will befall Daniel’s people will not be beyond Divine control. However, that is not stated strongly enough. God has determined to bring the Messiah forth from a people for whom no seeming hope exists. Their circumstances are anything but conducive to the bringing forth of a King, whose kingdom will have no end.

Notwithstanding that circumstance, the Savior will come into the world “in the fulness of the time” (Gal 4:45) – precisely on schedule, and without a moment’s delay. As we consider the machinations of this “vile” king, let us keep these things in mind, lest we be unduly impressed with his exploits.

THE FATTEST PLACES

“He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province . . .” Other versions read, “the richest parts of the realm,” NASB “the richest provinces,” NIV “fertile places,” BBE “rich and plentiful cities,” DOUAY “prosperous provinces.” NAB

The picture here is one of Egypt residing in comfort and seeming safety, considering Antiochus Epiphanes as their friend. Using Satanic and supernatural craftiness, he took possession of the principle cities of Egypt’s domain. I say Egypt’s domain not Egypt itself. I agree with Adam Clarke, who sees these principle cities as being within the areas of Colesyria and Palestine. Again, I emphasize that the word being given to Daniel regards what will befall his people. Of themselves, Egyptian cities would not be of significance. But when we consider they had rule over Palestine, we are right in the heart of Divine purpose. One writer points out that the invasion of Galilee was included in the undetected initiative of Antiochus . F.W Farrar

In my judgment “the fattest places” is a heavenly view of the Egyptian domain. It surely includes the idea of richness and productivity, but has more regard to “the holy land” Zech 2:12)over which Egypt was presiding. This is in keeping with other descriptions of the “land of the Jews” (Acts 10:39). These include “glorious land” (Dan 11:16,41), “pleasant land” (Dan 8:9; Psa 106:24), “the sanctuary” (Ex 15:17), “the Lord’s land” (Hos 9:3), “Immanuel” (Isa 8:8), “His land” (Joel 2:18), and “Beulah” (Isa 62:4).

SOMETHING HIS FATHERS AND HIS FATHERS’ FATHERS HAVE NOT DONE

“ . . . and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers . . .” Other versions read, “he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors,” NASB “he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did,” NIV and “do what none of his predecessors had ever done.” NRSV

Empowered by “the prince of Grecia,” and under the control of the Almighty God, this wicked king went beyond what others had done. It appeared as though he was operating without any restraint, making everything fall to his advantage. A worldly observer would find it exceedingly difficult to see in this circumstance a God who “does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth” – a God of whom it is said, “No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"” (Dan 4:35). Up to this point, the whole saga of Antiochus Epiphanes seems to contradict those words. Now, he reaches out in the exercise of a corrupt will and does something that none of his predecessors did. Surely this man is operating without being controlled!

His penetration of the cities of Egypt and the land of Israel was unparalleled. Others had waged wars in the same places, but this king took more spoils. The following verse will declare something he did that his ancestors did not do.

SCATTER THEM AMONG THE PREY

“ . . . he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches . . . ” Other versions read, “he will disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches,” NKJV “he will distribute plunder, booty, and possessions among them,” NASB “He will distribute plunder, loot, and wealth among his followers,” NIV and “distribute among his followers the plunder and wealth of the rich.” NLT

This is a most remarkable circumstance, for it contradicts a prideful and greedy spirit. Rather than hoarding up the spoils of his campaign against Egypt, he dispersed its wealth. He was so excessive in his distributions that historians say he later was afraid he would not be able to pay required tribute to Rome or again be so liberal with his soldiers. First Maccabees records the following. “He feared that he should not be able to bear the charges any longer, nor to have such gifts to give so liberally as he did before: for he had abounded above the kings that were before him.” 1 Macc 3:30

Polybius relates, that sometimes, meeting accidentally with people whom he had never seen before, he would enrich them with unexpected presents; and sometimes, standing in the public streets, he would throw about his money, and cry aloud, “Let him take it to whom fortune shall give it.” BENSON The book of Maccabees again records that his liberality jeopardized his ability to pay the tribute imposed upon Greece by Rome. “ . . . he having been so magnanimous and so liberal that what he had was not sufficient for him, he therefore resolved first to go into Persia, and collect the taxes of that country.” 1 Macc 12, chapter 7, section 2

An Observation

There is something of particular note to be seen in this text. Here was a king that was liberal, yet became poor because of it. When he gave to others, he was not blessed in return. Compare that with the promises made to the godly.

- “The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” (Prov 11:25)
- “He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.” (Prov 28:27)

- “Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.” (Luke 6:38)

- “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Cor 9:6).

And how is it that Antiochus Epiphanes was liberal, yet became the poorer for it? It is because he was not a righteous man. His heart was corrupt, being lifted up, and he was an enemy of the people of God.

What ought to be gained from this? It should be apparent that the promises of God are not inviolable laws that apply to everyone – like the law of gravity. The law of harvest is not one that is automatically put into motion regardless of the person who sows. The heart enters into the matter. It is possible to “sow much” and “bring in little,” (Hag 1:6). A “fruitful land” can be turned “into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein” (Psa 107:34).

Those who bring a health-and-wealth-gospel often speak of reaping bountifully as though it was a principle that cannot be contradicted. Such teaching causes confusion in the heart, and leads people to have flawed reasoning. Those who, like Antiochus Epiphanes, are aligned against the people of God will not be able to reap Divine benefits simply because they do something the Scriptures declare will bring a blessing. An impure heart casts the blanket of impurity upon all that is done. As it is written, “Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Titus 1:15).

Solomon said that even “the plowing of the wicked is sin” (Prov 21:4). That is why the Lord sometimes sends the locust, cankerworm, and caterpillar to consume the fruit of men’s labors (Joel 1:4; 2:26). Oh, that men were delivered from simplistic frames of religious thought! It seems as though our present culture nurtures such folly.

FORECAST HIS DEVICES

“ . . . yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds . . . ” Other versions read, “he shall devise his plans against the strongholds,” NKJV “he will devise his schemes,” NASB “he will plot the overthrow of fortresses,” NIV and “he shall plan his devices against the fortified places.” DARBY

Here, the word “forecast” means to develop a plan or strategy – not to predict. The word has evil connotations, literally meaning “to weave, plot, or contrive.” STRONG In other words, this ruler would devise means to take over the principle cities of Egypt’s domain.

Josephus records, “Antiochus took possession of Pelusium, the key of Egypt; he seized upon Memphis, and he then laid siege to Alexandria, supposing that if that were reduced, the whole country would be his.” Jos. Ant. b. xii. ch. v. Section 2. Another writer records, “By this may be meant his invasions of Galilee and Lower Egypt. Acting unlike any of his royal predecessors, he shall lavishly scatter his gains and his booty among needy followers, and shall plot to seize Pelusium, Naucratis, Alexandria, and other strongholds of Egypt for a time.” F.W Farrar, Expositor’s Bible

The point is that this evil king, reveling in the aftermath of many successes, made shrewd plans to take all of the principle cities of Egypt. Judging from appearance, there was no reason to suspect his plans would come short of fulfillment. However, “there is a God in heaven,” and He is “the Lord of kings” (Dan 2:27, 47). Make no mistake about this, “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps” (Prov 16:9). This tyrant, who has stained the pages of history, will have his plans sifted through the purpose of God, who will determine whether they will or will not be carried out.

An Observation

Child of God, take heart! When things seem to be in favor of your enemies, and circumstances are not your apparent friend, look up! God is working all things together for your good, even if you are subjected to Antiochus Epiphanes!

FOR A TIME

“ . . . even for a time.” Other versions read, “but only for a time,” NKJV, NASB, NIV, NRSV and “but this will last only for a short while.” NLT

Why is this so? Has this king not proved himself to be nearly invincible, both in power and shrewdness? Indeed, that may be the appearance, but it is not the fact of the case. There is no man who can control time or times! No mortal can create, sustain, or conclude a season! These are things that God alone can do, for “times” and “seasons” are in the power of God alone. As Jesus Himself said to His disciples, who inquired concerning the times, “And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power” (Acts 1:7). In speaking to Nebuchadnezzar, another seemingly invincible king, Daniel said, “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And He changeth the times and the seasons.” (Dan 2:20-21).

This verse means that Antiochus Epiphanes will, indeed, make his plans. However, even the making of them will not extend one second beyond the time God had appointed for him and his influence.

Faith can take hold of a God like that, trusting wholly in Him! Armed with this perspective life becomes more tolerable, and hope grows into a dominating expectation.

A GREAT ARMY, BUT HE SHALL NOT STAND

“ 25 And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him.”

To this point, our text has emphasized the craftiness and stealth of Antiochus. Now we will see that he was also capable of great military exploits. Now, in focusing upon Egypt, he will not

come in “peaceably,” or without due notice. He will muster the hosts for an open confrontation.

An Observation

Mark it well, it was not the devil’s purpose to merely have dissension within the Grecian Empire, with the North and South engaged in incessant battles. Were it not for the restraining powers of heaven, Syria and Egypt could have united and come against Israel. Instead, they are aligned against themselves.

This is not coincidence, but reveals a Divine manner. The Lord has allowed Satan a certain boundary in which to work . We see this in the controlled advances of the devil against Job. He could go no further than God allowed.

The same principle is found on a regional and even global level. This is seen in some statements made about the devil himself in the revelation given to John on Patmos. There our adversary is declared to be most hostile, filled “with great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time” (Rev 12:12). With cunning aggression he is depicted as casting a overwhelming flood out of his mouth, that he might cause the people of God to be “carried away of the flood.” The flood is focused and it is powerful, but it is not effective for “the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth” (Rev 12:13-16). Thus the saints were delivered from what was really intended for them.

The text before us shows much the same thing. Satan’s attention is upon “the pleasant land,” not Egypt. His purpose is to get rid of Israel, not the Egyptians. However, God will not allow his unbridled wrath to fall upon His people or His land. Instead, Antiochus will fight with his own nephew, against part of the very empire to which he himself belongs. This is “the earth” helping the woman, absorbing the shock of evil intentions in order to the survival of the elect.

Whatever circumstances have interrupted your life, and however grievous they may be, there is something you need to know. The earth has “helped” you, absorbing much of the blow Satan intended to level at you. You have not experienced the worst, but something you are “able to bear” (1 Cor 10:13). If you doubt that such a thing is possible, pay attention to this text. The truth of what I have just said will be lived out before you.

POWER AND COURAGE

STIRRED UP

“And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army . . .” Other versions say he will stir up his “strength and courage,” NASB, NIV “power and determination,” NRSV “his strength and his heart,” DOUAY and “strength and cleverness.” NAB

The idea is that Antiochus will employ all of his shrewdness and muster all of his courage to make an all-out assault against Egypt. No other consideration will neutralize his ambition. He will not be moved to other considerations. Before this, he came with a “small number of people” NKJV (11:23). Now he amasses a multitude.

Remember, God is in this matter, for “The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will” (Prov 21:1). It is ever true, “the preparations of the heart in man . . . is from the Lord” (Prov 16:1). Again, “Man’s goings are of the Lord” (Prov 20:24). God can even turn the hearts of men to hate his own people. As it is written, “He turned their heart to hate His people, to deal subtly with His servants” (Psa 105:25).

God can also make them “to be pitied of all those that carried them captives” (Psa 106:46), and even give Joseph “favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house” (Acts 7:10).

Remember, these are matters that have been written in “the Scriptures of Truth,” the book of Divine destiny. If this seems too challenging to consider, think of it in this manner. The Grecian Empire is now like a two-armed warrior. What God is going to do is have one arm cut off the other arm, thus diminishing the kingdom and readying it to pass from the stage of Divine purpose. Antiochus Epiphanes is one arm, and “the king of the South,” Ptolemy Philometor, his own nephew, and son of his sister Cleopatra, is the other.

Of this particular initiative, First Maccabees reads, “Wherefore he entered into Egypt with a great multitude, with chariots, and elephants, and horsemen, and a great navy, and made war against Ptolemy king of Egypt.” 1 Maccabees 1:17-18 Porphyry also writes, “Wherefore he entered Egypt with a great multitude, with chariots, and elephants, and horsemen, and a great navy.” — Porphyry, as quoted by Scaliger: Polybius, Legat, Sections 81, 82, 84; Livy, xlv. 19; xlv. 11; Justin, xxxiv. 2; Prideaux, Con. iii. 232-235.

THE KING OF THE SOUTH IS STIRRED UP

“ . . . and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army . . . ” Other versions say the king of the South would “mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war,” NASB “wage war with a large and very powerful army,” NIV “wage war with a much greater and stronger army,” NRSV and “march to war with a huge and powerful army.” NJB

The “king of the South” is Ptolemy Philometor, son of Ptolemy V Epiphanes and Cleopatra I, nephew of Antiochus Epiphanes, who was Cleopatra’s brother.

I have not been able to find the size of the army of the “king of the South,” as it is not listed in any of my resources. However, our text makes it clear that it was large enough to gain the victory. Not only was it “large and very powerful,” the NRSV states it was “a much greater and stronger army.”

Remember, these are two kings belonging to the same empire. They are even uncle and nephew. Yet, they are fiercely aligned against one another. Behold how God can turn our enemies against each other!

- Is it not said of the Midianites, “and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow , even throughout all the host” (Judg 7:22).
- On another occasion, when king Saul came up against the Philistines, “They found the Philistines in total confusion, striking each other with their swords ” NIV (1 Sam 14:20).
- On still another occasion, when Jehosaphat was facing the children of Ammon and Moab and men from mount Seir, “the sons of Ammon and Moab rose up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir destroying them completely, and when they had finished with the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another” NASB (2 Chr 20:23).
- Again, God promised Israel, “And I will set the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor ; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom” (Isa 19:2).

Throw that into the colander of prayer! It greatly enhances the possibilities, and brings hope to the “few” that find the way that leads to life. When believers are decidedly outnumbered, God can change the whole picture by causing their enemies to devour one another. That bit of understanding fuels faith and strengthens hope. We can have courage to seek such a resolution.

HE SHALL NOT STAND

“ . . . but he shall not stand . . . ” Other versions read, “he will not be able to stand,” NIV “he shall not succeed,” NRSV and “he will be forced to give way.” BBE

The largeness of his army provided no advantage. What was written in “the Scriptures of truth” outweighed military superiority. Here again, the plans of man are frustrated – but it is not by fate, and not by superior forces. God is to be seen in all of this, for He alone is able to remove kings (Dan 2:21). What is happening here is that God is giving the kingdom of Egypt to wicked Antiochus Epiphanes. That, of course, is something He has the right and wisdom to do. “The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men” (Dan 4:17).

FORECASTED DEVICES

“ . . . for they shall forecast devices against him.” Other versions read, “for they shall devise plans against him,” NKJV “for schemes will be devised against him,” NASB and “because of the plots devised against him.” NIV

We will find from the next verse that these devises and plots came from within his own ranks. These were not the schemes of Antiochus Epiphanes, but of those who were close to Ptolemy Philometor.

Who cannot see the marvelous working of God in this whole matter. The Grecian Empire is in a state of confusion. Inner fighting is taking place between the North and the South. Now we see that betrayal and treason takes place within the superior army of Ptolemy.

MANY SHALL FALL DOWN SLAIN

“ 26 Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.”

Ponder the various ways that God has wrought deliverances.

- In some cases, he caused the defenses to depart from the people (Num 14:9).
- In one case, an angel simply slew an entire army during the night (2 Kgs 19:35).
- In numerous cases, the enemies turned against each other (Judges 7:22; 1 Sam 14:20; 2 Chron 20:23).
- On one occasion, God flooded the country with water, making it appear as blood to the enemy, and thus weakening them (2 Kings 3:20).
- On yet another occasion the Lord hurled great hailstones down from heaven, killing more of the enemy than Israel killed with the sword (Josh 10:11).
- In Egypt, God used ten plagues to bring the Egyptians to ask Israel to leave their country, even giving them, many riches (Ex 12:36).
- God also simply delivered the enemy into the hands of His people through victory in battle (Judges 1:4).
- He also caused the enemy to refuse to stand against His people, also delivering them into their hands (Josh 21:44).

Now we will find yet another way in which the Lord caused defeat to take place.

HIS OWN PEOPLE

“Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him . . .” Other versions read, “those who eat his choice food will destroy him,” NASB “those who eat from the king’s provision will try to destroy him,” NIV “plots shall be devised against him by those who eat of the royal rations,” NRSV and “Those who shared his food will ruin him.” NJB

His foes were at his own table, eating his choice food. Perhaps they were relatives, advisors, close friends, and special confidants. Whether this came by betrayal to Antiochus, giving unsound advise, desertion, forming an alliance with the adversary, being bribed by Antiochus, or some other means, we do not know. The tree of his government was rotten at the core.

Commentator Benson says of this, “. . . it is certain that Eul us was a very wicked minister, and bred up the young king in luxury and effeminacy, contrary to his inclination. Ptolemy Macron, too, who was governor of Cyprus, revolted from him, and delivered up that important island to Antiochus. Nay, even the Alexandrians, seeing the distress of Philometor, renounced their allegiance; and taking his younger brother Euergetes, or Physcon, proclaimed him king instead of his elder brother.” BENSON’S COMMENTARY

OVERWHELMING VICTORY

“. . . and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain.” Other versions read, “his army will be swept away, and many will fall down slain” NKJV, NIV “his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain,” NASB “his army will come to complete destruction, and a great number will be put to the sword,” BBE and “his army shall be dissolved.” DARBY

The language indicates a great slaughter. The mighty and superior forces of Ptolemy were decidedly defeated. The way it is stated can also mean the army of Ptolemy was itself like a great flood, spread out so as to defeat Antiochus. Yet, in spite of their massiveness, they were slaughtered in a wholesale manner.

The book of Maccabees again provides some small amount of detail. “Wherefore he entered into Egypt with a great multitude, with chariots, and elephants, and horsemen, and a great navy, and made war against Ptolemy king of Egypt: but Ptolemy was afraid of him, and fled; and many were wounded to death.” 1 Macc 1:17-18

Josephus writes, “being with a great army at Pelusium, and circumventing Ptolemy Philometor by fraud, seized on Egypt; and being in the parts near to Memphis, and taking it, he hastened to Alexandria to besiege it, and got Ptolemy, reigning there, into his hands.” Antiqu. l. 12. c. 5, sect. 2

Thus Antiochus triumphs over his nephew, bringing Egypt under his dominion. All the while, the “glorious land” has remained between the warring kingdoms of Syria and Egypt. The eye of the Lord is upon it. It will survive all of these wars, and yet be the place where the Son of God will enter into the world in “the fulness of the time,” to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

BOTH WILL LIE, YET THEY SHALL NOT PROSPER

“ 27 And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.”

The corruption of both Antiochus and Ptolemy is revealed here. Although there had been a decided and unquestionable victory, yet a relationship continued between these two men.

MISCHIEVOUS HEARTS

“And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief. . .” Other versions read, “these kings hearts shall be bent on evil,” NKJV “their hearts will be intent upon evil,” NASB “their hearts will be fixed on doing evil,” BBE and “These kings' hearts shall meditate mischief.” DARBY

Here the uncle and the nephew meet together, feigning friendship, yet thinking treachery. During this time, Ptolemy's brother Physcon (also referred to as Ptolemy VIII Euergetes I) had been enthroned in Egypt. Of him history records, “also called Physcon (Greek: “Potbellied”) Macedonian king of Egypt who played a divisive role in trying to win the kingship, making himself subservient to Rome and encouraging Roman interference in Egypt. Ptolemy VIII ruled jointly with his brother, Ptolemy VI Philometor, in 170–164 BC and alone during the next year ; he was king of Cyrenaica (in modern Libya) in 163–145, and sole ruler of Egypt from 145 to his death in 116, except for a brief exile in 131–129. Continuously quarreling with his queen, Cleopatra II, the widow of Philometor, he caused civil war and economic collapse in Egypt. Late in his reign (118) he instituted extensive reforms to restore the country.” BRITANNICA 2003

Grollier's Encyclopedia says of him, “Ptolemy VIII, c.182-116 ©, presided over the accelerating decay of Ptolemaic Egypt. An unsavory intriguer, Ptolemy was co-ruler with his brother Ptolemy VI from 170 to 164 and king of Cyrenaica from 163 to 145. He assassinated (145) his nephew, Ptolemy VII, and was sole king of Egypt from 145 to 116. Ptolemy and one of his two wives fought (131-124) a long civil war that disrupted internal stability until 118; but he was able to retain control of Cyprus and Cyrenaica. He also intervened in Syria. His mischievous will, in which he divided Egypt's foreign territories, created conflict among his heirs.

From Ptolemy's side, the reason for the feigned friendship with his uncle Antiochus was to get his own brother off of the throne. As for Antiochus, he was attempting to seize the whole kingdom of Egypt for himself.

Neither of them had noble motives. Their hearts were corrupt, their minds were depraved, and their intentions were wicked. They toyed with each other, each one seeking their own corrupt and mischievous interests. GROLLIERS 2003

SPEAKING LIES AT ONE TABLE

“. . . and they shall speak lies at one table . . .” Other versions read, “at the same table,” NKJV “speak lies to each other at the same table,” NASB “sit at the same table and lie to each other,” NIV “exchange lies,” NRSV and “plot against each other at the conference table, attempting to deceive each other.” NLT

A casual observer might have said these two kings were negotiating, or trying to arrive at a consensus. Perhaps they were attempting to open some meaningful dialog, or trying to understand each other better. An uninformed person might have reasoned, “Well, at least they are talking. Something good will come from it.”

The angel, however, strips away all pretense, dealing a devastating blow to naivety. Both of the men are lying. They are deliberately deceiving each other, and there is not an ounce of sincerity in their hearts. Their purpose is “mischief,” i.e., to do evil to someone. Both are seeking their own advantage, with absolutely no regard for the other person. Under the guise of meaningful dialog, they are actually plotting against each other. Although he was a prisoner, Ptolemy is treated as a king by Antiochus. Although he was soundly defeated by his uncle, Ptolemy treats Antiochus with seeming respect. But it is all deception.

IT WILL NOT PROSPER

“. . . but it shall not prosper . . .” Other versions read, “it will not succeed,” NASB “but to no avail,” NIV “it will come to nothing,” BBE “they shall have no success,” NAB “they will not have their way,” NJB and “it will make no difference.” NLT

The lies and deceptions are all futile. The shrewdness, craftiness, and subtlety is all to no avail. Not only are the intentions of their hearts and their actions written in the “Scriptures of truth,” but the outcome of it all is written there as well.

This is not a prognostication, but a Divine determination. God will frustrate their desires and abort their purposes. He will make their wisdom foolishness and cause their purposes to be dashed to the ground. Even though they “will” to do this or that, God’s will thwarts their will . They have mischief in their hearts, and are bent on doing evil, but they cannot get it accomplished! If they had their way, much more evil would befall God’s people than will be experienced. But they will not have their desires, for God will not let them be realized.

It is still true, “The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect” (Psa 33:10). Whether it is Antiochus Epiphanes, Ptolemy Philometor, Herod, Nero, Hitler, or Saddam Hussein, their will and their purposes cannot be cast in stone. It is “the Most High” that “ruleth in the kingdom of men” (Dan 4:17). He is able to do “exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph 3:20). He is also able to “make void the counsel” of wayward souls (Jer 19:7), and “cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease” (Isa 13:11).

God can pass such judgment upon an individual that it can be said, “And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways : and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee” (Deu 28:29). When faith takes hold of this, it enables us to root out “the fear of man,” which consistently “bringeth a snare” (Prov 29:25).

AN APPOINTED TIME

“. . . for yet the end shall be at the time appointed.” Other versions read, “the end will still be at the appointed time,” NKJV “the end is still to come at the appointed time,” NASB “there remains an end at the appointed time,” NRSV and “the end will be at the time fixed.” BBE

Everything introduced in this passage was moving to an appointed end – a Divine controlled conclusion. Their lies would end. Sitting at one table would end. Their wars would end. Their feigned peace would end. Their reigns would end. They themselves would end. Their kingdoms would end. The Grecian Empire would end. The oppression of God’s people would finally end. The defilement of God’s land would end. Another kingdom would come, and other kings would reign.

It would all be by “appointment.” None of these conclusions would be the result of human strategy or action. The truth of the matter is that men cannot bring anything to an end, or “closure,” as some are wont to say. Only the One who is the “Finisher”, “Omega,” “End,” and “Last,” can truly conclude a matter (Heb 12:2; Rev 22:13).

Whether it is a purpose, a person, or a kingdom, when God calls down the curtain, that is the end. Until then, there is not a single or accumulated thought, word, or deed that can thwart, delay, or change Divinely appointed “ends.” They all come on schedule.

CONCLUSION

How we must thank and praise the Lord for revealing much of what is coming. While every detail has not been clearly made known, yet enough has been said to confirm that our times are truly in the Lord’s hand (Psa 31:15). Our enemies are not invincible, and our destiny is not in their hands. Circumstances may beat upon our lives, but they are not capable of dislodging us from the purpose of God, or cause the heart of the trusting one to faint. If things appear as though they are hopeless, that by no means indicates such a condition exists. This is God’s world, together with everything in it, and He is presently governing it through the Lord Jesus Christ, and with the intent of bring many sons to glory.

Everything is actually being orchestrated for the glory of God and our ultimate good. There is no reason to fear, and every reason to hope, and be strong in faith, giving glory to God. My prayer is that you will be able to associate the wonders of this text with your own pilgrimage. Daniel was in a strange land, and so are you. He was surrounded by disturbing things, and so are you. He had a heart for the people of God when they were under great duress. You may be sharing in a similar concern for the church.

God can bring the truth of this text home to your heart, enabling you to identify the Antiochus’ and Ptolemys with which you are contending. He can also assure your heart that the future cannot separate you from the love of God, or put you at a decided disadvantage. You have every reason to enjoy good hope and everlasting consolation through grace.

The Prophecy of Daniel

THE FUTURE IS UNFOLDED TO DANIEL, #5

Lesson # 36

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the book of Daniel, the greatness of God is again and again affirmed. He is the One who is governing the world, and all rulers are actually under His authority, whether they know it or not. This circumstance is not a mere formality, but applies to the very fabric of the kings of the earth and their dominion. There is no such thing as a king who operates independently of God, or a kingdom that is out from under His total and unhindered control.

When it comes to the fulfillment of Divine purpose, and the free exercise of God's power, man's will has no decisive influence at all. A corrupt human will does have an affect upon the destiny of the individual. However, in the matter of "eternal purpose," it has no role at all. Thus the creation, the

giving of the Law, and the salvation wrought out by Christ Jesus were in no way contingent upon human will. They were all the solitary expression of the Divine will.

Although I have mentioned this previously, I feel compelled to once again draw this to your attention. I do this because of the nature of the prophecy with which we are presently dealing. The precision of the prophecy is so remarkable that it tends to draw attention to itself rather than to the Lord. By nature, men gravitate to the lower realms, seeking explanations “under the heavens” instead of high above them, where explanations are actually found. We must push mere human reasoning into a secondary position by affirming the Sovereignty of God, and the surety of His purposes. If we fail to do this, the flesh will take up occupancy in the living room of our hearts and minds. Faith thrives upon affirmations of God’s nature and purpose.

REFERENCES TO GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY TO THIS POINT

- The Lord “gave” Jehoiakim to Nebuchadnezzar (1:2a).
- The Lord “gave” part of the vessels of His house to Nebuchadnezzar (1:2b).
- God brought Daniel “into favor with the prince of the eunuchs” (1:9).
- God gave Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel “skill in all learning and wisdom” (1:17a).
- God gave Daniel “understanding in all visions and dreams” (1:17b).
- Wisdom and might “belong” to God (2:20).
- God “changes” times and seasons (2:21a).
- God “removes kings” (2:21b).
- God “sets up” kings (2:21c).
- God gives “wisdom th the wise” (2:21d).
- God gives “knowledge to them who know understanding” (2:21e).
- God reveals “deep and secret things” (2:22a).

- God “knows what is in darkness, and light dwells with Him” (2:22b).
- God “made known” to Daniel the Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and its meaning (2:23).
- God “reveals secrets” (2:28a).
- God made known to Nebuchadnezzar what would be in the “latter days” (2:28b, 29,45).
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar his “kingdom, power, strength, and glory” (2:37; 5:18).
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar “the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heavens,” making him “ruler over all” (2:38).
- In the midst of global governments, God set up His kingdom, “which shall never be destroyed,” never know a successor, and will consume all other kingdoms, standing forever (2:44).
- God is the “God of gods” (2:47a).
- God is the “Lord of kings” (2:47b).
- God countermanded Nebuchadnezzar’s judgment by delivering the three children of Judah from the fiery furnace (3:24-28).
- There is no other god who can deliver as God does (3:29).
- God’s signs are “great,” and His wonders “mighty” (4:3a).
- God’s kingdom is an everlasting kingdom (4:3b,34).
- God’s dominion is from generation to generation (4:3c,34).
- God “rules in the kingdoms of men” (4:25a; 5:21).
- God gives the kingdoms of men to “whomsoever He will” (4:25b).
- The heavens do rule (4:26).

- God imposed a beast's heart upon Nebuchadnezzar, and made him spend seven years in the field, eating grass as an ox (4:31-33; 5:20-21).
- God returned Nebuchadnezzar's understanding to him (4:34).
- God does "according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (4:35a).
- No one can "stay" God's hand, or question what He does (4:35b).
- God is able to abase those who "walk in pride" (4:37).
- God intruded into Belshazzar's feast, bringing the revelry to an abrupt conclusion (5:5-9).
- God appoints over kingdoms "whomsoever He will" (5:21).
- The "breath" and "ways" of even kings are in the Lord's hand (5:23).
- God "weighed" Belshazzar in His scales, and found him wanting (5:27).
- God "divided" the kingdom of Babylon, giving it to "the Medes and the Persians" (5:28).
- God overturned the judgment of Darius, delivering Daniel from the lion's den (6:19-23).
- God is the Living God, and is "steadfast for ever" (6:26a).
- God's kingdom "shall not be destroyed," and "His dominion shall be unto the end" (6:26b).
- God "delivers and rescues" (6:27a).
- God works "signs and wonders in heaven and earth" (6:27b).
- The Empire of Babylon was like a great beast to whom God gave "the heart of a man" (5:4).
- God gave dominion to the Empire of Grecia (5:6).
- God cast down thrones (7:9).

- God “took away” the dominion of the four beastly governments (7:12).
- God gave “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom” to “the Son of man” (7:13-14a).
- Christ’s dominion is “an everlasting dominion” that will not pass away (7:14b).
- Christ’s kingdom is “that which shall not be destroyed” (7:14c).
- God “made” Daniel to know the interpretation of the vision of the beasts (7:16).
- The “Ancient of days” gave judgment to “the saints of the Most High” (7:22).
- God gave the saints into the hands of the enemy for a time, times, and half a time (7:25).
- God took “the dominion” away from worldly kingdoms (7:26).
- God will give “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven” to the “saints of the Most High” (7:27).
- God “broke” the horn of the Grecian Empire, causing Alexander the Great to die off of the battle field (8:8,22; 11:4).
- God gave a “his” to the “little horn,” enabling him to cast truth “to the ground” (8:12).
- God limited to desolation of His house to 2,300 days (8:14).
- God made Daniel understand the vision little horn (8:16).
- God broke the power of Antiochus Epiphanes without any human involvement (8:25).
- God “poured out a curse” upon Judah for their disobedience (9:11).
- God brought “great evil” upon Judah for their sin (9:12).
- God brought Israel out of Egypt (9:15).

- God caused the angel Gabriel to fly swiftly from heaven to earth (9:21).
- God determined “seventy weeks” upon His people (9:24).
- What occurs upon earth has already been written in “the Scriptures of Truth,” determined by God(11:21).
- God “divided” the Grecian Empire into four parts (11:4a).
- God “plucked up” Alexander’s kingdom (11:4b).
- God caused a wicked alliance of Grecian powers to “not stand” (11:6).
- God gave “a multitude” into the hand of the “king of the South” (11:11).
- God caused Antiochus the Great to “stumble and fall, and not be found” (11:19).
- God caused a “raiser of taxes” to be destroyed in a short time, “neither in anger, nor in battle” (11:20).
- God caused a king with superior forces to “not stand,” with those at his own table conspiring against him (11:25).
- God made the cause of two kings “speaking lies at one table” to “not prosper” (11:27a).
- God caused an “end” to come at “the appointed time” (11:27b).

SOMETHING TO BE SEEN

In all of these things, the unquestionable ability and power of the Lord was made known. We must not fail to see this, for here is where the element of edification and profit is to be found. There are at least four levels where the dominion and will of the Almighty God was revealed and confirmed.

- At the highest level, the devil could not hinder, thwart, or effectively resist the will of God.
- The high places of Satan’s citadel of power, principalities and powers, such as the “prince of Persia” and “the prince of Grecia” could not withstand the working of the Lord.
- The loftiest earthly powers – kings and kingdoms – were utterly powerless before the God of heaven.

Kingly edicts and purposes failed, and governmental objectives fell to the ground in absolute defeat.

- At the lowest level, the enemies of God's people, like the magicians and wise men of Babylon, were utterly impotent before God. Evil purposes and intentions were thrown down.

GOD HIMSELF IS THE POINT

It should be evident to us that God Himself is the point, not historical events. The events are themselves evidences of, and commentaries upon, the working of the Lord. That working has preeminently to do with His glory and purpose, and secondarily to do with His people and His commitments to them.

Thus, the children of Judah were preserved, Jerusalem remained, and the Temple continued. All of this culminated in the appearance of the Son of God in "the fulness of the time." This even included Him standing in the Temple as "the Messenger of the Covenant." Malachi prophesied, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal 3:1). This text introduces John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Christ (Isa 40:3-5; Matt 3:1-3), who himself would come from the Jewish stock. The Lord Jesus, introduced by John, would also come from that stock, and come into the Temple – a place where He taught during the day (Mk 12:36; Lk 21:37). Thus the Jews, the city of Jerusalem, and the Temple, must be present when "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). Working through these kings, Satan was attempting to remove the people, their city, and the Temple. However, over and above his working, the Lord was sustaining all three in the very midst of tumult and chaos.

Not a single delay was realized, even though Satan, His hosts, kings, kingdoms, and personal enemies sought to hinder what the Lord was doing – some knowingly, and some in total ignorance.

It is no wonder that we are told, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31). The book of Daniel provides some insights into HOW God works all things together, causing them to serve His purpose and ultimately benefit His people. Nothing is out from under His control!

- He raises up and removes earthly rulers.
- He controls kings and kingdoms.
- He subdues spiritual forces.
- He employs holy angels.

- He provides revelation and insight.
- He overturns earthly determinations.
- He strengthens His people.
- He works within the framework of Divine appointments.
- He gives wisdom.

All of these, and much more, are used of God to fulfill His purpose, sustain His people, and bring Him glory. They rich sources of edification.

GREAT RICHES, YET UNSATISFIED

“ 11:28 Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.”

The angel has just told Daniel of a time of relative peace – when two kings (Antiochus Epiphanes and Ptolemy Philometor) would sit at one table, speaking lies to one another. While deception was the mother of this seemingly peaceful environ, the angel will now reveal to Daniel how this will affect his people and Jerusalem. This is, of course, the intention of the prophecy – to reveal to Daniel what will befall his people in the latter time (10:13). This is not a mere commentary on human history or the rise and fall of Greece.

HE SHALL RETURN TO HIS LAND

“Then shall he return into his land with great riches . . .” The “great riches” of reference is what this king plundered from Egypt. Thus the NASB reads, “he will return to his land with much plunder.”

The “he” to which the angel refers is Antiochus Epiphanes. He has attacked Egypt, coming “against the king of the South with a great army” (v 25). Even though outnumbered by the army of the “king of the South,” he wins a decisive battle because Ptolemy Philometor was betrayed by his own people (11:26). However, Egypt still did not belong to Antiochus Epiphanes. He actually ruled as young Ptolemy’s guardian instead of the uncontested monarch of the kingdom. History says of this: “Antiochus

forestalled an Egyptian expedition to Palestine by invading Egypt. He defeated the Egyptians between Pelusium and Mount Kasion, conquered Pelusium, and in 169 occupied Egypt with the exception of Alexandria, the capital. Ptolemy VI was Antiochus' nephew—Antiochus' sister, Cleopatra I, had married Ptolemy V—and Antiochus contented himself with ruling Egypt as Ptolemy's guardian , giving Rome no excuse for intervention.” BRITANNICA 2003

Now, the angel says, he returns to his own land – Syria. He takes with him “great riches,” taken from his exploits in Egypt. The book of First Maccabees says of this return, “Thus they got the strong cities in the land of Egypt and he took the spoils thereof. And after that Antiochus had smitten Egypt, he returned again in the hundred forty and third year” (1 Macc 1:19-20a).

At the time he was returning to his own country, he heard “that there had been a report of his death, at which the citizens of Jerusalem had made great rejoicings.” ADAM CLARKE Of this, the following has been written: “When he was in Egypt, a report was spread abroad that he was dead. In consequence of this rumour, Jason took the opportunity of recovering the office of high priest from his brother Menelaus, and with a thousand men took Jerusalem, drove Menelaus into the castle, and killed many whom he took for his enemies. Antiochus, hearing of this, supposed that all the Jews had revolted, and determined to inflict summary chastisement on them on his way to his own land.” Jahn, “Heb Commonwealth,” p. 263.

History records that on his way back to his own land, he turned aside to attack Jerusalem. This is the action to which the angel refers in the next part of the verse.

HIS HEART SHALL BE AGAINST THE HOLY COVENANT

“ . . . and his heart shall be against the holy covenant . . . ”

The expression here is important. This is how heaven viewed the action of Antiochus Epiphanes. From the earthly point of view, he turned aside to punish those with whom he was displeased. This was a fit of rage through which he thought to subdue the Jews, sweeping them into his efforts of hellenize (or make Greek) the world. But this is not how heaven viewed his action.

The angel's words are pointed: “his heart shall be against the holy covenant.” The more liberal NLT version reads, “On the way he will set himself against the people of the holy covenant.” That is actually an interpretation of the text, and not a translation. According to appearance, his actions were, indeed, “against the people of the holy covenant.” But he did not regard that covenant as holy, or associate the Jews with the holy God of heaven. With Antiochus, this was purely a political and personally vindictive matter.

However, the people he was attacking were in covenant with the God of heaven, and heaven regarded his actions as being “against the holy covenant.”

Touching the Jews

In the very beginning, when God made covenant with Abraham, He was clear about how He regarded those who touched Abraham's offspring.

- “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee : and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen 12:3).
- Isaac conferred the same blessing upon Jacob: “cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee” (Gen 27:29).
- At Sinai, contingent upon their obedience, the same commitment was made to Israel: “I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries” (Ex 23:22).
- Balaam saw the Spirit of God with Israel, and said this: “Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee” (Num 24:9).
- Zechariah prophesied of this people: “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye” (Zech 2:8). God had clearly declared Israel to be “the apple of His eye” (Deut 32:10).

Now Antiochus Epiphanes fastens his eyes upon this people for evil – and thus aligns himself against “the holy covenant.”

Which Covenant?

What is “the holy covenant?” Is it the one made at Sinai, where God affirmed “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Ex 19:6). Indeed not! For that covenant was contingent upon the faithfulness of Israel: “Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine” (Ex 19:5).

The “holy covenant” is the one made with Abraham, to which absolutely no conditions were attached. “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed ” (Gen 12:3). This was a promise that ultimately related to the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a unilateral covenant made by God with Abraham. It was not negotiated, but was announced. In Abraham's “Seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed” (Gen 26:4; 28:14). That is the “holy covenant” against which this wicked king aligned himself – even though he did not know it. This was the nation “of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came” (Rom

9:5). Therefore, those who were against them were against “the holy covenant.”

Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, referred to this covenant as God’s “holy covenant” (Luke 1:72) – the one He “promised” to the “fathers” Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Just as in our time, the Jews were then “beloved for the fathers’ (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) sakes” (Rom 11:28). Thus heaven regards Antiochus as being against the “holy covenant,” which specifically pertained to the coming of the Messiah.

HE SHALL DO EXPLOITS

“ . . . and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land.” Other versions read, “so he shall do damage,” NKJV “he will take action,” NASB “he will take action against it,” NIV and “he shall work his will .”

From the standpoint of appearance, it will seem as though Antiochus works without any restraint whatsoever. He will attack the people of the land with a vengeance, and it will seem as though they are totally in his hand. Of this awful siege, the following has been written.

“And after that Antiochus had smitten Egypt, he returned again in the hundred forty and third year, and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great multitude, 1:21 And entered proudly into the sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof, And the table of the shewbread, and the pouring vessels, and the vials. and the censers of gold, and the veil, and the crown, and the golden ornaments that were before the temple, all which he pulled off. 1:23 He took also the silver and the gold, and the precious vessels: also he took the hidden treasures which he found. 1:24 And when he had taken all away, he went into his own land having made a great massacre, and spoken very proudly.” 1ST MACC 1:20-24

“He returned immediately, slew many thousands of the inhabitants and robbed the temple of its treasures.”
INTL STD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA

Historians record the following of this awful occasion. “Antiochus brought a great army against Jerusalem; took it by storm; slew forty thousand of the inhabitants; sold as many more for slaves; boiled swine’s flesh, and sprinkled the temple and the altar with the broth; broke into the holy of holies; took away the golden vessels and other sacred treasures, to the value of one thousand eight hundred talents; restored Menelaus to his office; and made one Philip, a Phrygian, governor of Judea.”

1 Macc. 1:24; 2 Macc. 5:21. Prideaux and Newton

These atrocities are termed “exploits” by the holy angel. It is because of initiatives such as this that Antiochus Epiphanes is referred to by the angel. He had other “exploits,” but these are particularly mentioned because they were “against the holy covenant.”

NOT SATISFIED

Although Antiochus Epiphanes has plundered Egypt, and carried away “great riches,” yet he will easily be turned aside to harass the people of God, and to take riches from them as well.

From this we learn that the heart cannot be satisfied with the wealth of this world. The “lust of the eye” is “never satisfied,” and will never say “It is enough” (Prov 30:15). This is precisely why “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition” NKJV (1 Tim 6:9). It is also why covetousness “is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

We are living in a time in which the heart can be easily drawn aside to covetousness. We should take occasion through this text to consider the folly of pursuing riches, and planning for wealth, as though it was possible to reach a point where such things can satisfy us. Such things cannot ultimately gratify.

AN APPOINTED RETURN

“ 29 At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.”

After he had finished massacring many Jews, and seizing many golden vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem, Antiochus returned to Antioch – his own land – enriched and filled with pride over his exploits. What had occurred to the Jews was tragic, yet the angel is careful to open up to Daniel what would “befall” his people – even though it was most painful to the heart.

It IS God’s manner to open things He has determined to His people – things that can cause pain to the heart.

- Thus He told Abraham his people would be “afflicted” in a strange land for “four hundred years” (Gen 15:13).

- He also told Abraham of the impending destruction of Sodom (Gen 18:17-23).
- Extensive revelation was given to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk about the Babylonian captivity, and the horrors that would accompany it (Isa 39:6; Jer 20:4; 25:11; Hab 1:6-10).
- Jesus told His disciples of the coming destruction of Jerusalem and of the grief that would be associated with it (Matt 24:15-20).
- The Lord revealed to Paul the time of a coming apostasy, and moved him to give the message to the churches (2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1-5).
- As He did with Daniel, in John's old age, he was told of a coming corrupt church that would shed the blood of righteous men and appear invincible (Rev 17:1-6).

Such revelations were given in order to assist the people of God in preparing for such times through prayer and the perfection of holiness. Religious men are too often lulled into spiritual sleep when things are going well, and religious prosperity and popularity is in large proportions.

The current purported religious musical revival that is taking place has not been birthed by hardship and trial, but by popularity, ease, and friendship with the world. While it is not popular to oppose such movements, their fruitage confirms that someone must do so. Even though the professed Western church is acknowledgeably in deplorable condition, this wave of emulated praise has not produced weeping saints like Jeremiah (Jer 9:1), shaken God-fearing men like Daniel (Dan 8:17; 10:9-10), or astonished men like John on the Isle of Patmos (Rev 17:6). All of these men received revelations of the coming oppression of God's people, and were moved by it.

Now the angel will confirm that all of these things are not only duly noted in heaven, but that they are controlled by "the God of the Jews" (Rom 3:19).

AT THE TIME APPOINTED

"At the time appointed he shall return . . ."

Since the heavenly messengers were sent to Daniel, things "appointed" will be mentioned no less than five times (8:19; 10:1; 11:27,29,35). There are also four references to things "determined" (9:24,26,27; 11:36). These are expressions of the Lord ruling "in the midst" of His enemies (Psa 110:2). It is His purpose that is ultimately being served, not the corrupt desires of men. The Lord's agenda is driving the course of this world, not the manipulative agendas of men.

Thus, after an unknown period of time, Antiochus Epiphanes is once again vaulted into activity by Divine purpose – at “the time appointed.” This world is being precisely moved along to an appointed destiny.

By way of passing interest, the expression “time appointed” is used thirteen times in Scripture (Gen 18:14; Ex 23:15; Josh 8:14; 1 Sam 20:35; 2 Sam 24:15; Psa 81:3; Jer 46:17; Dan 8:19; 10:1; 11:27,29,35; Gal 4:2). The expression “appointed time” is mentioned four times (Esth 9:27; Job 7:1; 14:14; Hab 2:3). Three times we read the words “the Lord appointed” (Ex 9:5; Matt 27:10; Lk 10:1). There are also other references to appointments made by the Lord (2 Chron 33:8; Isa 44:7; Mic 6:9; Lk 22:29; 1 Thess 3:3; 5:9; 2 Tim 1:11; Heb 1:2; 3:2; 9:27; 1 Pet 2:8).

This, then, is the language of Divine government and oversight. It is designed to assure us that things are not as chaotic as they may appear.

HE WILL COME TOWARD THE SOUTH

“ . . . and come toward the south.”

The king of reference now heads for the South, or Egypt, once again. This speaks of the third invasion of Egypt by Antiochus Epiphanes, and took place in 168 B.C. The first invasion was mentioned in verse 22 (171 B.C.), and the second in verses 25-27 (170 B.C.). The reason for bringing these matters to our attention is that they involve Israel. Otherwise, they would have no real significance.

Historically, the events that occasioned this return involved an alliance made between Ptolemy and his brother Physcon. Ptolemy had perceived the treachery of his uncle, Antiochus, and therefore determined to resist him, keeping the kingdom of the South for himself. They determined “that they should share the government between them, and resist Antiochus with their united power. To do this, they hired mercenary troops from Greece. Antiochus, learning this, openly threw off the mask, and prepared to invade Egypt again. He sent his fleet to Cyprus to secure possession of that island, and led his army toward Egypt to subdue the two brothers, designing to annex the whole country to his dominions.” BARNES/CLARKE

However, the angel does not give Daniel an historical perspective, but a heavenly one : “At the appointed time he shall return.”

IT WILL BE DIFFERENT

“ . . . but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter.” Other versions read, “but this time it will not turn out the way it did before,” NASB and “the outcome will be different from what it was before.” NIV

In confirmation of the Lord's government of both kings and kingdoms, the initiative of Antiochus will fall short of previous advances. The Word of the Lord is again confirmed in this effort. "The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect" (Psa 33:10). And again, "That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish" (Isa 44:25).

History tells us the efforts of Antiochus failed because of the alliance Ptolemy and his brother made with Rome. However, that was a secondary reason, and not the primary one. The counsels of the Lord are what brought these disappointing results to Antiochus. That counsel did, in fact, show itself in history, but it was God who brought it to pass.

OPPONENTS THAT GRIEVE BUT DO NOT DESTROY

" 30 For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant."

The angel now makes known to Daniel how the attack against Egypt will be foiled. Remember, these are things written in "the Scriptures of Truth," reflecting Divine determinations and workings. Believers must continually strengthen their hearts with the recollection that "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein" (Psa 24:10).

THE SHIPS OF CHITTIM COME AGAINST HIM

"For the ships of Chittim shall come against him . . ." Other versions read, "ships of Cyrus shall come against him," NKJV "ships of Kittim will come against him," NASB "Ships from the Western coastlands will oppose him," NIV "those who go out from the West will oppose him," BBE and "the galleys and the Romans shall come upon him." DOUAY

The word "Chittim" means "bruisers," and is "a general term for all islanders of the Mediterranean Sea." STRONGS It is used in a variety of ways in Scripture. Balaam prophesied that ships would come "from the coast of Chittim" afflicting Asshur (the Assyrians) and Edber (the Hebrews) (Num 24:24). This was a prophecy of the invasions of Greece and Rome. Isaiah refers to "the land of Chittim" (Isa 24:1,12). Jeremiah wrote of "the isles of Chittim," referring to the coasts of Cyprus which were West of Palestine. Ezekiel also referred to "the isles of Chittim," also referring to Cyprus. All of these areas were West of Palestine, being either Islands (as Cyprus), or Coastal areas, like Italy.

The idea of the text is that ships, or a naval fleet, would come against Antiochus Epiphanes from the West, thus thwarting his mission. In all of this it is important to remember that Rome would

eventually displace Greece, as foretold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, and Daniel's vision of the four beasts. What we are witnessing, therefore, are the death-throes of the Grecian Empire, and the strengthening of Rome. All of this was being governed by the God of heaven as things moved forward toward the coming of the Messiah, the Seed of woman, and the appointed ruler of the Kingdom of God, that would decimate all other kingdoms.

The historian Jahn records the following. "When he had arrived at Leusine, about four miles from Alexandria, he met Caius Popilins Laenas, Caius Decimius, and Caius Hostilius, ambassadors, whom the Roman Senate had sent to him at the earnest request of Ptolemy Physcon. They were instructed to assure Antiochus that he must leave the kingdom of Egypt and the island of Cyprus in peace, or expect a war with the Romans. When Antiochus said that he would lay the affair before his council, Popilius, the head of the legation, with his staff drew a circle about the king in the sand on which they stood, and exclaimed, 'Before you leave that circle, you must give me an answer which I can report to the Senate.' Antiochus was confounded, but on a little reflection, he said he would do whatever the Senate required." Jahn, "Hebrews Commonwealth," pp. 265, 266; Polyb. "Legat." Sections 90, 92; Livy, xlv. 14, 29, 41-46; xlv. 10, 12.

Another record reads, "These ambassadors came by the way of Greece, and in Grecian vessels, and their coming might properly be described as "ships from Chittim." They went from Rome to Brundisium, and then passed over to the Grecian shore, and from thence by the way of Chialcis, Delos, and Rhodes, to Alexandria." Prideaux, iii. 237

One commentator writes, "Chittim is well known to mean the Roman empire. Antiochus, being now in full march to besiege Alexandria, and within seven miles of that city, heard that ships were arrived there from Rome, with legates from the senate. He went to salute them. They delivered to him the letters of the senate, in which he was commanded, on pain of the displeasure of the Roman people, to put an end to the war against his nephews. Antiochus said he would go and consult his friends; on which Popilius, one of the legates, took his staff, and instantly drew a circle round Antiochus on the sand where he stood, and commanded him not to pass that circle till he had given a definitive answer. Antiochus, intimidated, said, he would do whatever the senate enjoined; and in a few days after began his march, and returned to Syria. This is confirmed by Polybius, Livy, Velleius, Paterculus, Valerius Maximus, and Justin." ADAM CLARKE

OBSERVATION

Generally speaking, these ships came from Rome in response to appeals by the rulers of Egypt. They came to stand in the gap, so to speak, for Egypt. However, that is all according to appearance. Technically speaking, and in accord with reality, the Lord called for these forces to come "against" Antiochus Epiphanes, to bring his initiative to a grinding halt – and that is precisely what they did.

HE SHALL BE GRIEVED AND RETURN

". . . therefore he shall be grieved." Other versions read, "he will be disheartened," NASB "he shall lose heart and withdraw," NRSV and "he shall be afraid and withdraw." RSV

Thus, using appointed means, the Lord turns the king's heart "as the rivers of water: He turneth

it whithersoever He will” (Prov 21:1).

This wicked king is mortified, humbled, and disappointed. Yet, his diabolical mind is still against the people of God. Once again, he will turn his attention to the Jews, and “against the holy covenant” God made with Abraham. This is now the second time he has responded in this manner to the frustration of his own purposes (verses 28 and 30).

Already he has attacked Jerusalem, slaughtering the people and plundering the Temple through wicked “exploits” (verse 28). Now he will return with even greater vengeance.

INDIGNATION AGAINST THE HOLY COVENANT

“ . . . and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do.” Other versions read, “return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage,” NKJV “return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action,” NASB “turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant,” NIV and “take furious action against the holy covenant.” NJB

According to appearance, it seems as though the children of Abraham have been counted “as sheep for the slaughter.” As David said, “Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter” (Psa 44:22).

One historian records the following. “Polybius says that he left Egypt in great anger, because he was compelled by the Romans to abandon his designs. In this condition he was, of course, in a state of mind to become irritated against any other people, and, if an occasion should be given, would seek to vent his wrath in some other direction. This habitual state of feeling toward Jerusalem and the Jews would make him ready to seize upon the slightest pretext to wreak his vengeance on the holy land. What was the immediate occasion of his taking this opportunity to attack Jerusalem is not certainly known, but in his marching back through Palestine, he detached from his army twentytwo thousand men, under the command of Apollonius, and sent them to Jerusalem to destroy it.” Prideaux, iii. 239; Jahn, “Hebrews Commonwealth,” p. 266.

Adam Clarke says of this event, “For he vented his rage against the Jews; and he sent his general, Apollonius, with twenty-two thousand men against Jerusalem, plundered and set fire to the city, pulled down the houses round about it, slew much of the people, and built a castle on an eminence that commanded the temple, and slew multitudes of the poor people who had come up to worship, polluted every place, so that the temple service was totally abandoned, and all the people fled from the city. And when he returned to Antioch he published a decree that all should conform to the Grecian worship; and the Jewish worship was totally abrogated, and the temple itself consecrated to Jupiter Olympius. How great must the wickedness of the people have been when God could tolerate this!”

This return to destroy Jerusalem takes place just two years after he did “exploits” against the

Jews before – also in a return from Egypt.

The Jews had not particularly provoked Antiochus this time, as they had before by spreading the rumour that he was dead. Politically, there was no cause for his aggression against the Jews. However, there had been a significant departure from the Lord among them, and thus the chastening hand of God was upon them.

CORRUPTION IN ISRAEL

While I have mentioned this before, it is necessary again say something about it. The events of this text took place around 170-167 B.C. – about 370 years after the word is being delivered to Daniel. Between the time of Daniel and the ravaging attacks of Antiochus Epiphanes, the children of Israel had gone backward instead of forward.

The last Prophet to write Scripture was Malachi. He wrote somewhere between 445-432 B.C., or nearly 100 years after Daniel had received this word. In vivid words, Malachi described the state of the people, and it was a deplorable one indeed!

- They questioned God's love for them (1:2).
- They did not honor or fear God (1:6).
- They offered polluted bread upon His altar (1:7a).
- They treated the table of the Lord with contempt (1:7b).
- They offered the blind, lame, and sick as sacrifices (1:8).
- God had no pleasure in them, and would not receive their offerings (1:10).
- They profaned the name of the Lord (1:12).
- The priests departed out of the way, causing many to stumble (2:8).
- The priests did not keep the ways of God, and were partial in the Law (2:9).
- Judah dealt treacherously with God (2:11a).

- Judah profaned the holiness of the Lord, and married the daughter of a strange God (2:11b).
- They wearied the Lord with their words (2:17).
- They went away from the Lord's ordinances, and did not keep them (3:7).
- They robbed God by withholding their tithes and offerings (3:8).
- Their words were stout against God (3:13).
- They said it was vain to serve the Lord (3:14).
- They called the proud happy, those who worked wickedness were elevated (3:15).

It was these conditions that brought such awful judgments against the people. If Israel had been walking in a manner that was pleasing to God, He could have caused their enemies to be at peace with them (Prov 16:7). But they were in a condition that displeased the Lord, and therefore He gave them over into the hands of their enemies, as He had frequently done (Judges 2:14; 2 Kgs 21:14; 2 Chron 25:20; Neh 9:27; Jer 12:7; 20:4; Ezek 39:23).

IT IS A FEARFUL THING

It is not without cause that we read, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31). Who can forget Samuel's solemn words concerning the a king: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men" (2 Sam 7:14). And what of the 600,000 that died in the wilderness en route to Canaan (Heb 3:17). In one plague, the Lord slew 14,700 Israelites (Num 16:49). In another plague, 24,000 died. Once "much people died" from the bites of venomous snakes that were sent among them (Num 21:6). Once the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from morning to evening, killing 70,000 men (2 Sam 24:15).

WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION

All of these things have been "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor 10:11). They are an index to the Divine nature, confirming to our hearts His contempt for iniquity. We are living in a time when the professed church has fallen asleep, and has therefore lost its sense of these things – if, indeed, it ever possessed such sensitivity.

INTELLIGENCE WITH HIM THAT FORSAKE THE HOLY COVENANT

" . . . he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." Other versions read, "show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant," NKJV,NASB "show favor to

those who forsake the holy covenant,” NIV “pay heed to those who forsake the holy covenant,” NRSV and “reward those who forsake the covenant.” NLT

The word translated “intelligence” has a very wide meaning. It can mean to discern, understand, or perceive. It can also mean consider diligently, or regard. Using the first definition, our text would mean the king was able to detect who had no real regard for the “holy covenant” – those who preferred the accolades of men to the praise of God. Using the second definition, the text means he would give special favors to those who had no respect for the “holy covenant.”

In a sense, both of these meanings apply. Antiochus Epiphanes would give special favors to those having no regard for the “holy covenant” because he was, in fact, able to tell who they were. Such people would more readily seek his praise, and be more easily convinced to side with him.

From the viewpoint of Antiochus Epiphanes, he was attempting to hellenize the world, making it adopt the Greek values and customs. From the Jew’s viewpoint, this meant forsaking “the holy covenant,” and leaving the national heritage of being associated primarily with the God of heaven. There were some who were quite willing to do this, having no respect for God or the covenant He had made with Abraham. As Jahn writes, there were some who were “inclined to do this, and to introduce the customs of the Greeks.” Hebrews Commonwealth, pp 258-260 The historical books of the Maccabees says the following of these compromisers. “ 1:11 In those days went there out of Israel wicked men, who persuaded many, saying, Let us go and make a covenant with the heathen that are round about us: for since we departed from them we have had much sorrow. 1:12 So this device pleased them well. 1:13 Then certain of the people were so forward herein, that they went to the king, who gave them licence to do after the ordinances of the heathen: 1:14 Whereupon they built a place of exercise at Jerusalem according to the customs of the heathen: 1:15 And made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant, and joined themselves to the heathen, and were sold to do mischief.” First Macc 1:11-15

Concerning this remarkably detailed record, Bishop Newton writes the following. “It may be proper to stand a little here, and reflect how particular and ircumstantial this prophecy is, concerning Egypt and Syria, from the death of Alexander to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. There is not so concise, comprehensive, and regular an account of their kings and affairs to be found in any authors of those times. The prophecy is really more perfect han any history, and is so wonderfully exact, not only to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, but likewise equally so beyond that time, that we may conclude in the words of the inspired writer, ‘No one could thus declare the times and seasons, but he who hath them in his own power.’” NEWTON, A.D. 1754

APPLICATION

There are still people who wear the name of the Lord who prefer the friendship of the world to the approbation of Almighty God. The Spirit refers to the very best of this group in these words: “Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42-43). To the worst of them he says this. “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will

be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). It is tragic that such people exist in the church – but they do.

Let it be clear, those who despise identity with the Lord, choosing to court the friendship of His enemies, eventually move God to loose the enemy. This is such a common practice in the professed church that it is an embarrassment to sensitive souls. Such worldly alliances are being revealed in all areas of “church” activity: its business, leadership, education, organization, recruitment, and music. It is a most serious circumstance.

POLLUTION AND DESECRATION

“ 31 And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.”

Now the wickedness of this king is made more fully known. Having before desecrated the Temple, he now does it once again. This time, however, he does it with the aid of apostate Jews who have cast their lot with him, and thus turned their backs upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

ARMS SHALL STAND ON HIS PART

“And arms shall stand on his part . . .” Other versions read, “forces shall be mustered by him,” NKJV “forces by him will arise,” NASB “His armed forces will rise up ,” NIV and “Forces sent by him shall occupy.” NRSV

Some have concluded these “arms” were the apostate Jews that chose to stand with Antiochus. In this view the “arms,” or forces, would be those who “forsake the holy covenant” (v 30). Others see them as a militia sent by Antiochus into Jerusalem, for the purpose of destroying it. It is most likely that both Syrian forces and Jewish apostates were involved in this initiative. The point of the text is that Antiochus himself launched this attack. It is he who was most pointedly “against the holy covenant” (vs 28 and 30a). As for those Jews who “forsook the covenant,” they joined in the conspiracy by both participation and in principle. Those who are not “for” the Lord are, in fact, “against” Him. As Jesus said, “He that is not with Me is against Me” (Luke 11:23). In the text before us, some of the Jews formally carried out that opposition.

Application

From righteous Abel to this very day, the people of God have always had enemies. However, no

enemies are as treacherous as those who have turned their backs on the Lord Jesus. Whether they do so deliberately or not, such souls have sided with the enemies of the people of God, and will be appropriately punished with them. By becoming wicked themselves, they have “joined” hand in hand with the wicked and “shall not go unpunished” (Prov 11:21). This is one of the factors that compounds apostasy, making it all the more difficult for recovery to be experienced.

POLLUTE THE SANCTUARY OF STRENGTH

“ . . . and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate..” Other versions read, “and shall defile the sanctuary fortress,” NKJV “desecrate the sanctuary fortress,” NASB “desecrate the Temple fortress,” NIV and “profane the Temple fortress.” NRSV

In addition to desecrating the Temple, the daily sacrifices were brought to an end, and an altar to an idol was placed upon the very altar of God, thereby bringing “abomination” into the Temple of God.

Having a keen interest in things pertaining to the Lord, Daniel had prayed concerning the holy city and Temple. Hear Him plead with His God: “O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain” (9:16). And again, “shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord’s sake” (9:17). And again, “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God: for Thy city and thy people are called by Thy name” (Dan 9:19).

Because of His great love the Lord’s land, the holy city, and the Sanctuary of the Temple, the Lord will also share with Daniel things that will befall all of them. The purpose for making them known is not to cast Daniel down, but to confirm that He will not forsake them. Though they will be chastened for their waywardness, He will “not make a full end” of Israel, even though He certainly will “make a full end of all the nations” whether they were scattered (Jer 4:27; 46:28).

Now, under the leadership of Antiochus Epiphanes, the “sanctuary of strength” is polluted. The dreadful account of this profanation is recorded in the Maccabees.

“ 1:41 Moreover king Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom, that all should be one people, 1:42 And every one should leave his laws: so all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king. 1:43 Yea, many also of the Israelites consented to his religion, and sacrificed unto idols, and profaned the Sabbath. 1:44 For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Juda that they should follow the strange laws of the land, 1:45 And forbid burnt offerings, and sacrifice, and drink offerings, in the temple; and that they should profane the Sabbaths

and festival days: 1:46 And pollute the sanctuary and holy people: Set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts: 1:48 That they should also leave their children uncircumcised, and make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation: 1:49 To the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances. 1:50 And whosoever would not do according to the commandment of the king, he said, he should die. 1:51 In the selfsame manner wrote he to his whole kingdom, and appointed overseers over all the people, commanding the cities of Juda to sacrifice, city by city. 1:52 Then many of the people were gathered unto them, to wit every one that forsook the law; and so they committed evils in the land; 1:53 And drove the Israelites into secret places, even wheresoever they could flee for succour. 1:54 Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side; 1:55 And burnt incense at the doors of their houses, and in the streets. 1:56 And when they had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire. 1:57 And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament, or if any committed to the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death. 1:58 Thus did they by their authority unto the Israelites every month, to as many as were found in the cities. 1:59 Now the five and twentieth day of the month they did sacrifice upon the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God. At which time according to the commandment they put to death certain women, that had caused their children to be circumcised. 1:61 And they hanged the infants about their necks, and rifled their houses, and slew them that had circumcised them. 1:62 Howbeit many in Israel were fully resolved and confirmed in themselves not to eat any unclean thing. 1:63 Wherefore the rather to die, that they might not be defiled with meats, and that they might not profane the holy covenant: so then they died. 1:64 And there was very great wrath upon Israel." 1 Macc 1:41-64

It has become highly fashionable in our day to speak of the religion and gods of other people – giving them respect and a sort of dignity. However, note how the angel refers to the placing of another god in the Temple of the Lord: “they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate.” Other versions read, “they will set up the abomination of desolation,” NASB and “set up the abomination that causes desolation.” NIV

The phraseology employed by the angel is most arresting. The “abomination” to which he refers is an idol. Through the Prophets, the Spirit consistently referred to idols as “abominations” (Deut 32:16; Jer 7:30; 1 Pet 4:3). Carrying the matter even further, Antiochus called the Temple “the temple of Jupiter Olympius.” 2 Macc 6:2 The following is a brief account of this.

“They did sacrifice upon the idol- altar, which was upon the altar of God. At this time an old man, by the name of Athenaeus, was sent to Jerusalem to instruct the Jews in the Greek religion, and compel them to an observance of its rites. He dedicated the temple to Jupiter Olympius; and on the altar of Jehovah he placed a smaller altar, to be used in sacrificing to the pagan god.” Jahn, “Hebrews Commonwealth,” pp. 267,268.

This wretched defilement was the mother of the desolation that followed. It is as though the defilement was so deplorable the city had to be laid waste. Thus history records of that time, “Now Jerusalem lay void as a wilderness, there was none of her children that went in or out: the sanctuary also was trodden down, and aliens kept the strong hold; the heathen had their habitation in that place; and joy was taken from Jacob, and the pipe with the harp ceased.” 1 Maccabees 3:45

Let it be clear, the desolation that followed was because of the abomination that was set up in the Temple of God. That idol was an abomination that caused desolation. God would not allow the Temple to flourish under such a condition.

A PRINCIPLE TO BE SEEN

There is a vital kingdom principle to be seen in this text. When abomination comes in, it brings a curse to the whole of the matter, and a need for a fresh beginning is introduced . A few examples of this will suffice to establish the point.

- When sin entered into the world, the entire universe, and mankind as well, came under a curse (Rom 5:12; 8:20-21).
- When Achan coveted and took the unlawful, “trouble” came upon the entire nation (Josh 7:16).
- When the sins of the world were laid upon Christ, and He was “made to be sin for us,” He was “cursed” (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13).

In the text before us, even though all of the Israelites did not consent to the defilement of the Temple, yet some of them did. The Temple being thus defiled, desolation followed, for God cannot bless or defend what is defiled .

I will wax bold at this point and affirm that desolation is nearly always preceded by a condition that is spiritually abominable before God – a condition that arouses the wrath of the thrice-holy God. Whether it is expulsion from the Garden (Gen 3:24), a scattering at Babel (Gen 11:8), or the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 19:43-44), abominable conditions always preceded the associated judgment.

The Relevance of This to Our Day

This principle accounts for the spiritual desolation that exists in our day – a day of a famine “of hearing the Words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11). It accounts for the dispersion of believers, and the remarkable degree of division that exists among professed believers. The prominence of false prophets may also be traced back to this condition. There are abominations within the church – conditions that are intolerable to God. Among other things this consists of a “form of godliness that denies the power thereof” (2 Tim 3:6), friendship with the world (James 4:4), an ignorance of God (Eph 4:18), a high degree of tolerance with false teaching (Rev 2:20), and many departures from the faith (1 Tim 4:1).

God will not bless an impure and faltering church, any more than He would a disobedient and compromising Israel. Astute organizational structures, church growth programs, and the likes, will not bring a faltering church into a spiritually upright position. There must first be a desolation of unacceptable conditions before genuine renewal can be experienced. That is why Israel was told, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (2 Chr 7:14). It is why a transgressing church is told, “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:10).

God sent Nebuchadnezzar against Israel for her sins (1 Chron 6:15). Twice God stirred up an adversary against Solomon because of his sins (1 Kgs 11:14,25). The whole nation of Judah was judged because Manasseh had “provoked” the Lord (2 Kgs 23:26). Our text declared the momentary success of Antiochus Epiphanes because of the deplorable state of Israel. Let us rid ourselves of any notion that God will overlook sin in His church. The fact of the matter is this: “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God : and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Pet 4:17-18). It is in order to seriously ponder these realities, and to seek to be among the concerned.

STRONG IN THE MIDST OF OPPRESSION

“ 32 And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.”

We will now see that there are certain penalties realized by a defection from the Lord. They suddenly are at the mercy of wicked men, for whom they have abandoned the Lord and His ways. It is not only true that “no man can serve two masters” (Matt 6:24), it is also true that every one serves one master . Paul stated it succinctly when he wrote, “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom 6:16). No person is his own master, for “the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer 10:23). A person who cannot direct his own steps cannot possibly be his own master – and there is not a person who can direct their own path, or be the master of their own destiny.

The principle we will see here is that those who chose to abandon the Lord will be at the mercy of the wicked.

SUCH AS DO WICKEDLY AGAINST THE COVENANT

“ . . . And such as do wickedly against the covenant . . . ” Other versions read, “those who act wickedly toward the covenant,” NASB “those who have violated the covenant,” NIV and “those who were disloyal to the covenant.” NAB

These are Jews who submitted themselves to the idolatrous practices of the Greeks – breaking

their covenant with the Living God. That agreement was stated at Sinai: “All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do” (Ex 19:8). When they entered into Canaan, Israel made the agreement again: “The LORD our God will we serve, and His voice will we obey” (Josh 24:24). Following the Babylonian captivity, they affirmed the covenant again: “and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and His judgments and His statutes” (Neh 10:29).

It is no wonder that the angel refers to these covenant-breakers as doing “wickedly against the covenant.” We should not expect such people to prosper, or to gain benefits from the heathen to whom they willingly subjected themselves.

HE SHALL CORRUPT BY FLATTERIES

“ . . . shall he corrupt by flatteries . . . ” Other versions read, “by smooth words he will turn to godlessness,” NASB “seduce with intrigue,” NRSV “will be turned to sin by his fair words,” BBE “shall be corrupt by blandishments,” JPS and “make some . . . to apostatize.” NAB

The people who did not cleave to the “holy covenant” would be deceived into further impiety and apostasy. The implication is that these people thought they could use Antiochus to their advantage. Instead, however, he used them to his advantage, for the wicked cannot be manipulated by men for personal advantage.

Like corruptors do, this king overcame disobedient people by “good words and fair speeches” (Rom 16:18), and “great swelling words” (Jude 1:16). Perhaps he offered them gifts, knowing that “every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts” (Prov 19:6). In this case, the people were overthrown by what was deceitfully given to them. As it is written, “he that receiveth gifts overthroweth it (the land) ” (Prov 29:4). It is ever true, “A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet” (Prov 29:5). How vividly this is seen in Antiochus Epiphanes.

A Principle to Be Seen

An extremely important kingdom principle is seen in this text – a principle that transcends covenants, spanning all time. When a person or people refuse to receive from God, God will dictate their delusion, choosing those delusions for them, and ensuring that they are effective.

There is no question about this being true, for the Spirit has spoken expressly. Under the Old Covenant God spoke to those who insisted on walking in ways that did not delight Him. “I also will choose their delusions , and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before Mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not” (Isa 66:4).

Under the New Covenant the Spirit speaks of one “whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie : that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess 2:9-12).

Those who treat their relationship to God through Christ with contempt cannot avoid the judgment of God. Unless they repent, they will be sent delusions they will not be able to decipher – delusions that will drag them down to perdition. I want to emphasize that it is not possible to avoid Divinely imposed delusion if the love of the truth is not received. We are living in a time when the truth is not held in high regard. The views of men are being held too high, creating an environment in which delusion thrives. This is a time to be sober and vigilant, and “valiant for the truth” (Jer 9:3).

THE PEOPLE THAT KNOW THEIR GOD

“ . . . but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.” Other versions read, “but the people who know their God will display strength and take action,” NASB “but the people who know their God will firmly resist him,” NIV and “ but the people who have knowledge of their God will be strong and do well.” BBE

Some of the versions are particularly weak on this verse – such as the NIV that renders “do exploits” “firmly resist him.” While it is true that those who know their God would not be taken in by the flatteries of this king, more is intended by this word than that. The word translated “do exploits” is one that signifies accomplishment, advance, and bringing forth . It includes the idea of producing, fashioning, making, and preparing. STRONGS

The people that “do know their God” are declared to do more than simply resist the encroachments of Antiochus Epiphanes – although that alone would require considerable effort. Two things are said of these people.

They Will Be Strong

It is one thing to “be strong” when the people are flourishing, the enemy is subdued, and the favor of God is resting upon your nation. It is quite another thing to “be strong” when your city is being invaded, the Temple of your God is being desecrated, and bloodshed and oppression is all around you.

Being “strong” includes being courageous, obstinate against iniquity, and having a forwardness to live godly when it is not fashionable. Strength also includes the idea of constancy, establishment, and being valiant.

Commenting on the occasion being foretold to Daniel, Josephus wrote, “that many of the Jews indeed, some willingly, and others through fear of punishment, obeyed the king’s commands; but the more approved, and those of generous minds, had a greater regard to the customs of their country than to the punishment threatened to the disobedient; and for this being continually harassed, and enduring grievous punishments, died; some were scourged, and their bodies mutilated, and being yet alive and breathing, were crucified; women and their children, whom they crucified, were by the king’s orders strangled, and hanged about the necks of their parents that were crucified.” Antiquities. l. 12. c. 5. sect. 4. That was an exhibition of great strength!

In the book of Hebrews, the Spirit refers to people who endured through great strength. Some are of the opinion the group includes some who lived during this intertestamental period. “Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb 11:35-38).

They Will Do Exploits

These people actually made some progress, and forged some new spiritual trails during a time of oppression. They not only held their ground, they made some advancement. They gathered all of the courage faith could muster and gladly discharged their duty before the Lord. “Even when Epiphanes seemed most nearly successful, there was a deep-seated opposition to this Hellenizing process. Especially prominent were those who were zealous for the Law, the Hasidim, or, to give them the name they have in the Book of Maccabees, the Assidseans. These religionists, headed by Mattathias and his sons, especially by the heroic Judas Maccabaeus, certainly knew their God, and as certainly did exploits.” PULPIT COMMENTARY

The Source of Their Strength and Exploits

The angel accounts for the strength and exploits of these faithful Jews. They knew their God! Their association with God through their faith caused them to be strong and accomplish what was otherwise impossible. Of all of the knowledge available to men, this is the primary and most foundational knowledge – “the knowledge of God.”

When David instructed Solomon he said, “know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart” (1 Chron 28:9). Those who truly know the Lord will put their trust in Him (Psa 9:10). That is why they are strong and “do exploits.”

In The New Covenant

Within the New Covenant, all of the constituents of that covenant know their God, and none of them are ignorant of Him. Of that covenant it is written, “And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least

of them unto the greatest of them , saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11).

The “knowledge of God” accounts for spiritual strength and exploits. The lack of “the knowledge of God” accounts for spiritual weakness and the lack of fruit.

Following the exaltation of the Lord Jesus, what the Spirit says about “the knowledge of God” confirms its centrality in the Divine economy. It is always attached to something pivotal.

- **ETERNAL LIFE IS KNOWING GOD.** “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God , and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).
- **GRACE AND PEACE ARE ADMINISTERED THROUGH THIS KNOWLEDGE.** “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God , and of Jesus our Lord” (2 Pet 1:2).
- **THINGS PERTAINING TO LIFE AND GODLINESS ARE REALIZED THROUGH THIS KNOWLEDGE.** “According as His Divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet 1:3).
- **WE ESCAPE THE POLLUTIONS OF THE WORLD THROUGH THIS KNOWLEDGE.** “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ , they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Pet 2:20).

A lack of familiarity with God guarantees weakness and falling before the enemy. These are arresting realities to consider. However, it assists us to perceive the real people of God, and distinguish them from imposters.

UNDERSTANDING, INSTRUCTION, YET AN OVERTHROW

“ 33 And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.”

Here the angel continues to elaborate upon those who are not taken in by the flatteries and aggression of Antiochus Epiphanes. Not only are they described as “they that do know their God,” but they also are “they that understand.” It is possible that these are two separate groups of people, each excelling in these virtues. It seems more likely to me, however, that this is an explanation of some of the “exploits” accomplished by those who “do know their God.”

THEY THAT UNDERSTAND

“And they that understand among the people shall instruct many . . .” Other versions read, “those who have insight among the people will give understanding to many,” NASB “those who are wise will instruct many,” NIV “they that are wise among the people shall instruct the many,” DARBY “The knowledgeable among the people will make the many understand.” TNK

These are people regarded by heaven as wise and with understanding. They are not men whose intellects have been trained by rote, or those who are only well read in the works of men. Those who are truly wise have a grasp of the Word of God and a cognizance of His purpose. They are individuals who can “handle aright the Word of God,” and traffic in eternal verity. All of this flows out from their knowledge of and acquaintance with the God of heaven.

Such individuals are like the men of Issachar “which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chr 12:32). They can “discern the signs of the times, (Matt 16:3), and thus not be taken in by the flatteries of Antiochus Epiphanes. These are people whom God has “taught knowledge,” and whom He had made to “understand doctrine” (Isa 28:9).

Such people, the angel tells Daniel, will “make many understand.” They will bring such wonderful knowledge to the people as will enable them to stand in the evil day Eph 6:13). Even in the day of assault, when apostasy was prominent in Israel, and some of the chosen people were siding with an idolatrous heathen king, there remained some who “feared the Lord,” and had understanding. Rather than caving in to the pressure of the times, they dispensed real knowledge, assisting humble souls to be strong, and to stand.

For Those in Christ Jesus

For those in Christ Jesus, this kind of understanding is called “the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9). It is comprehending with all saints “what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:19). These are the individuals who are “of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb 5:14).

Surely you know that we are living in a time when such knowledge is exceedingly rare. In the

religious world, this is a day of intellectual mimicry and borrowed knowledge. The preponderance of Christian speaking is much like a compendium of quotations and views from other men. While such an approach may have measured value under certain circumstances, it is certainly not the mode of the kingdom.

Those who teach the people of God must themselves have some “spiritual understanding,” being able to discern good and evil, decipher the times, and handle the Word of truth correctly. If they cannot do this, they should promptly be seated in “the room of the unlearned” (1 Cor 14:16). No amount of academic credentials, worldly expertise, or administrative skills can compensate for a lack of such understanding.

YET THEY SHALL FALL BY THE SWORD, FLAME, CAPTIVITY, AND SPOIL

“ . . . yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days.” Other versions read, “yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering,” NKJV “yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder, for many days,” NASB and “though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered.” NIV

Here we come to grips with the nature of spiritual knowledge and godly instruction. Some imagine that a good understanding and faithful teaching guarantees longevity – even though there is nothing in the Word of God to support such a notion. Here is a group of godly people, endowed with good understanding, and faithful in communicating that understanding to others. Yet, things did not consistently go well for them.

For a period of time these faithful teachers were subjected to such opposition that they fell by the sword, were burned alive, taken captive, or had their goods plundered. These were the kind of people to which the Spirit referred in Hebrews. “And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb 11:38).

The author of the book of Maccabees records some of the terrible things to which these faithful people were subjected.

“2:31 Now when it was told the king's servants, and the host that was at Jerusalem, in the city of David, that certain men, who had broken the king's commandment, were gone down into the secret places in the wilderness,

2:32 They pursued after them a great number, and having overtaken them, they camped against them, and made war against them on the sabbath day.

2:33 And they said unto them, Let that which ye have done hitherto suffice; come forth, and do according to the

commandment of the king, and ye shall live.

2:34 But they said, We will not come forth, neither will we do the king's commandment, to profane the sabbath day.

2:35 So then they gave them the battle with all speed.

2:36 Howbeit they answered them not, neither cast they a stone at them, nor stopped the places where they lay hid;

2:37 But said, Let us die all in our innocency: heaven and earth will testify for us, that ye put us to death wrongfully.

2:38 So they rose up against them in battle on the sabbath, and they slew them, with their wives and children and their cattle, to the number of a thousand people." 2 Macc 2:31-38

Another entry in the book of Maccabees reads: "And others, that had run together into caves near by, to keep the sabbath day secretly, being discovered by Philip, were all burnt together, because they made a conscience to help themselves for the honour of the most sacred day."

2 Macc 6:11

SOME OBSERVATIONS

The book of Revelation speaks of those who overcame the "accuser" of the brethren. The way that overcoming was realized is quite different from much of the talk being circulated in the Christian community in this day. Here is the testimony of the Spirit, spoken to the churches. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Rev 12:11). In this case, the evidence of Satan being overcome was not seen in him fleeing, as often occurs when he is resisted steadfastly (James 4:7). Here the devil was overcome by means of a godly death – martyrdom, if you please.

There are some testimonies that are sealed with the blood of the teacher. Stephen was such a man, as well as Peter, Paul, Antipas, and a host of others. Spiritual understanding and being an excellent teacher do not guarantee long life. It will, however, bring about a death that will glorify God (John 21:19), guaranteeing that an "entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:11).

Our Day

This is the day of religious careers, financially profitable ministries, and happy religious entertainment. It is a day of religious froth that will not sustain the soul in the time of trial. We do well to take heed to the message being delivered to Daniel. The Lord does not hide from this man of God what is up ahead. It is not all pleasant. It is also very possible that your earthly experience will not always be pleasant. However, in living by faith and walking in the Spirit, there is no reason why you cannot be one of those strong souls who do great exploits.

A LITTLE HELP

“ 34 Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.”

I want to keep before you that we are being exposed to the Divine nature, and the manner in which God governs His kingdom. There are larger things in view than personal comfort, financial security, and worldly popularity. I cannot over-emphasize the vanity of the type of religion that is being promoted in our day. This is a time of spiritual shallowness, surface explanations, and fleshly values. If we will receive it, this text will assist in delivering us from the snares associated with such times.

HELPED A LITTLE

“Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help . . .” Other versions read, “Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help,” NKJV “Now when they fall they will be granted a little help” NASB “While all these persecutions are going on, a little help will arrive,” NLT and “In defeat, they will receive a little help.” TNK

First, the summation of the thought here expounded is this: although Antiochus had determined to stamp out the Jewish religion, making Greeks out of all the Jews, the true worship of Jehovah and the propagation of the Law continued. His efforts were not successful, even though he outnumbered the Jews in staggering proportions.

This passage most probably refers to the rise of the Maccabees, who refused to give in to the demands of Antiochus Epiphanes. They championed a return to the Law and the testimony, fighting against the imposition of Grecian manners. They were sorely outnumbered, yet achieved some remarkable success.

The record of the rise of the Maccabees is found in the second chapter of First Maccabees. The work of Judas Maccabeus was involved, who was the one who cleansed the temple of the defilements imposed upon it by Antiochus. That cleansing was referred to in Daniel 8:14, which word was expounded by Gabriel the angel. The McClintok and Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical Knowledge records the following of Judas Maccabeus and his followers.

“(MACCABAE'US), a title (usually in the plural – "the Maccabees"), which was originally the surname of Judas, one of the sons of Mattathias, but was afterwards extended to the heroic family of which he was one of the noblest representatives, and in a still wider sense to the Palestinian martyrs in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, SEE

MACCABEES 4, and even to the Alexandrine Jews who suffered for their faith at an earlier time. SEE 3 MACCABEES. In the following account of the Maccabean family and revolution we shall endeavor to fill up this interesting interval of inspiration.”

John Gill says this of the stand of the Maccabees. “When the Jews shall be thus harassed and distressed by Antiochus and his armies, to the ruin of many, by the several sorts of punishments inflicted on them; they should be helped and eased a little by Mattathias, a priest of Modin, and his five sons, commonly called the Maccabees; Porphyry himself interprets this of Mattathias: the help and assistance which he and his sons gave to the Jews was but ‘little’; if we consider they were persons of a small figure, began with a handful of men, and could do but little, especially at first; and though great exploits were done by them, considering their number and strength, yet they were not able to restore the land to its former glory and liberty; nor did this help of theirs last long, but the enemy returned with great fierceness and cruelty, and sadly afflicted the people of the Jews.”

The point of the angel, however, is not merely that a “little help” came from some fellow Jews. Rather, it is that God sent them a little help through this band of faithful men. It was like “a little reviving” in bondage (Ezra 9:8).

In this case, the “little help” kept the faith alive, and the nation in place for the coming of the Messiah in “the fulness of the time.” Antiochus Epiphanes’ purpose was to hellenize the Jews, wiping out their religion, and making idol-worshiping Greeks out of them. Behind his effort, however, the devil was making an aggressive attempt to stop the Seed of the woman from coming into the world through these chosen people. He was thwarted, praise God, by “a little help.”

Something to Learn

There is a great lesson to be learned here. Believers must come to the point where they do not despise “small things” (Zech 4:10) and “little help.” The Lord is fully capable of reversing Satanic initiatives with things that are foolish and despised, doing so amidst what appears to be near-total victory by the enemy.

With all of the contemporary emphasis on largeness, it is good to remember that God does not need large numbers of people to keep the truth alive.

MANY SHALL CLEAVE TO THEM WITH FLATTERIES

“ . . . but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.” Other versions read, “but many shall join with them by intrigue,” NKJV “and many will join with them in hypocrisy,” NASB “though many who join them will not be sincere,” NLT and “and many will join them insincerely.” TNK

Here the angel informs Daniel that some will join the efforts to resist Antiochus, even though

they are not doing so out of noble motives. They will not be sincere, even though they expend a seemingly hearty effort in the behalf of good. However, their hearts are not in the matter. They are more nationalistic than spiritual, and are motivated more by pride than by faith.

History tells us that some, seeing the success of the Maccabees, joined with them, seeking earthly honor instead of God's glory. The book of Maccabees records the following. "Joseph the son of Zacharias, and Azarias, captains of the garrisons, heard of the valiant acts and warlike deeds which they had done. 57 Wherefore they said, Let us also get us a name, and go fight against the heathen that are round about us." 1 Maccabees 5:56

Religious Success Breeds Hypocrisy

Here again we see a principle with which we must struggle in our day. Often the seeming success of the church is like an open door into which hypocrites and false teachers can enter. Something like this was involved in the surfacing of Ananias and Sapphira in the early church (Acts 5). It was also found in the desire of Simon the Sorcerer to purchase the ability to confer the Holy Spirit with the laying on of hands (Acts 8:19-20). John also spoke of some who spent some time with the Apostles, yet finally went out from them, because they were not of them (1 John 2:19). Paul also wrote of those who "preached Christ of contention, and not sincerely" Phil 1:16).

While we are not to be suspicious, or go about "thinking evil" of every one who seeks to be identified with the church, we are to be sober and alert for those who would come in unawares. Some enter to "spy out our liberty" (Gal 2:4). Others seek to judge us in respect various expressions of the Law that do not apply to us (Col 2:16).

One of the fundamental weaknesses of developing what is termed "seeker friendly churches" is found in this very area. The motivation for edifying the body and seeking the lost must be higher than trying to please or attract men. Our fundamental desire must be to please the Lord, and to labor together with Him. Even when we do this faithfully, we will encounter our share of people who tend to join with us in hypocrisy. It is foolish in the extreme to pursue a course that actually tends to encourage such reactions. If we keep our affection placed on things above, we will be more safe, more able to resist the devil, and more suitable for glory.

TRYING, PURGING, AND MADE WHITE

" 35 And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed."

As the angel continues to unfold what will befall Daniel's people, it becomes apparent that the future is not all glowing with pleasantries. There are some rough paths, steep mountains, and deep valleys in the future. Some deserts will have to be crossed, and some enemies will have to be faced. There will be chastening as well as tender mercies, and correction as well as commendation. It is imperative that we rid ourselves of naive views of being the people of God.

SOME WITH UNDERSTANDING WILL FALL

“And some of them of understanding shall fall . . .” Other versions read, “some of those who have insight will fall,” NASB “some of the wise will stumble,” NIV and “some who are wise will fall victim to persecution.” NLT

The angel is quick to say that only “some of them with understanding” will fall into the hands of their oppressors. This will not be the experience of them all! Remember, God is governing all of these affairs.

These are not those who are wise after the flesh, for God accounts such wisdom to really be foolishness (1 Cor 1:20-21; 3:19). These are those who are wise in things pertaining to God. In particular, these were men who knew the covenant, and were acquainted with both its manners and its requirements. They did not have academic wisdom like the Scribes and Pharisees, but possessed understanding that came from God.

It may appear on the surface, because there is so few such individuals, that they can never be subjected to worldly restraint, persecution, or martyrdom. However, that is not the case. Throughout the history of this world, wise and godly men have been subjected to all manner of persecution. Daniel is told it will be no different in the future.

The word “fall” does not mean fall away from the Lord, fall from the faith, or fall into sin. There would be some setbacks for these noble souls – some defeats and frustrations. It would be like David fleeing from Saul (1 Sam 20:1; 21:10), or hiding in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam 22:1).

In Our Times

Believers should not be surprised by temporary setbacks – even when they appear to be rather serious. I am not speaking of lapses into immorality or unbelief, for that is altogether intolerable. I am rather referring to times when the enemy seems to have the upper hand. Paul expressed such times in very arresting language. “For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life” (2 Cor 1:8). Hear him testify again. “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are

perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor 4:8-9).

Sometimes the servant of God, while engaged in a good work, must be lowered over a wall in a basket to escape his enemies (Acts 9:26). Sometimes they are stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). God’s people must become acquainted with this kingdom reality: “and some of them of understanding shall fall” – fall into the hands of the enemy, and into hard times!

TRIED, PURGED, AND MADE WHITE

“ . . . to try them, and to purge, and to make them white . . . ” Other versions read, “to refine them, purify them, and make them white,” NKJV “in order to refine, purge, and make them pure,” NASB and “refined, purified, and made spotless.” NIV

There are lofty purposes that are served by trials and tribulations. Here the angel mentions three of them. Refining is like being put into the fire to burn out impurities. Purging is like being polished to a bright shine, where blemishes and imperfections are buffed out of one’s character. Being made white is like being washed and scrubbed, so as to remove defiling spots.

Keep in mind, here the angel is not referring to pretenders, as those who joined themselves to the defenders of the faith with flatteries. These were genuine men of God. They had valid understanding, and were faithfully teaching others in the Jewish manner while Antiochus was attempting to make idol-worshipping Greeks out of them all.

Here is a marvelous thing to behold! In the oppositions these men were enduring, things were being worked together for their good. Over and above the activities of their enemies, their God was at work, orchestrating everything for their ultimate good. Through their afflictions they were being refined, purged, and made white. They were being oriented for the world to come by being purged from the defilements of this world – and it was all being accomplished through their enemies. Who but God can work such things!

Life in Christ Jesus

Try as we may, as long as we are in this world, there are impurities, blemishes, and defilements that attach themselves to us. These are not things that are preferred, but are the consequence of being in a cursed and dying world. The dregs of mortality cling too easily to us. Tribulations, working together with the grace of God, help to rid us of such defilements.

The Word of God speaks of the very effects chronicled in this text. It provides sound reasons for suffering affliction.

- “But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves , but in God which raiseth the dead” (2 Cor 1:9)
- “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God , and not of us” (2 Cor 4:7).
- “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world ” (1 Cor 11:32).
- “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Cor 12:7).
- “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God , for which ye also suffer” (2 Thess 1:4-5).

This is part of what is involved in the marvelous working of God on our behalf. As it is written, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). The words “work together” refer to God causing things to serve an appointed purpose.

TO THE TIME OF THE END

“ . . . even to the time of the end.” Other versions read, “until the time of the end,” NKJV “until the end time,” NASB “till the time be out,” GENEVA “until the time of the End,” NJB “till the end of the time.” YLT

The point of this expression is not to point to the end of time – but to the end of the oppression. That is, the time of suffering has a Divinely imposed limit. The very fact that these sufferings were intended to refine, purify, and purge God’s people is proof enough that they will not continue forever. As soon as their objective is realized, God will bring a conclusion to them. That is a most comforting prospect.

This is further confirmed in the next phrase, which categorically affirms an appointed duration of the declared afflictions.

A TIME APPOINTED

“ . . . because it is yet for a time appointed. ” Other versions read, “it is still to come at the

appointed time,” NASB and “it is still for a fixed time.” BBE

The “time appointed” pertains to the entire trial, not just to its beginning. The time of its initiation was appointed. Its purpose was appointed. Its duration was appointed. The refining will satisfactorily completed. The purging will be accomplished on schedule. Being made white will conclude acceptably.

CONCLUSION

This was a hard revelation to be received because Daniel loved the people of God, His land, and His Sanctuary. To hear of the people being slaughtered, the land being invaded, and the Sanctuary being defiled was anything but good news. Yet, these were Divine determinations, and the Lord desired to share them with Daniel, the one who was “greatly beloved.” He knew that Daniel could handle this knowledge, mingling it with supplications and persistent godliness.

What is God able to share with you? What portions of Scripture is He able to profitably open to you? Can He show you the tragedy of a great falling away? Or the rise of a spiritual Babylon? Can He open to your understanding the realities of a day when men have a form of godliness, yet deny the power thereof. Does the thought of the persecution and oppression of the people of God offend you?

These are not pleasant things to consider, just as what Daniel was shown did not produce feelings of great joy within him. They are part and parcel of the “fellowship of His sufferings,” in which an experience of Divine fellowship is realized that cannot otherwise be known. Yet, there are truths that God is seeking to share with those who can be faithful custodians of them – men and women who will not be overcome by such considerations, but will rather enter into a fellowship with the Lord concerning them.

Perhaps you are such a person. If not, your faith can qualify you to be such an one. If you are affected by the abuses or truth, the people of God, and the city of God, you will be especially noted by the Lord.

Ezekiel’s Experience

On one occasion, the Lord revealed to Ezekiel the coming judgment of His people. Ezekiel was a young man, yet he was sensitive to the Lord. He was shown “six men,” coming by way of “the higher gate.” Every one of them had “a slaughter weapon in his hand.” It was an awesome sight, indeed. One man among them was “clothed with linen,” with a “writer’s inkhorn by his side.”

All six men went in and stood beside the brazen altar. The glory of the Lord was present in that place. Suddenly the Lord called out to “the man clothed with linen, which had the writer’s inkhorn by his side.” A solemn commission was given to him. “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek 9:4).

Simultaneously, the Lord called out to the other men. “Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark ; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house” (Ezek 9:6).

What about you? Would that man with the inkhorn have placed a mark upon you? Do you sigh and cry for the abominations that are found among the people of God? Does the failure of men to declare the truth agitate your spirit? Are you grieved when corruption surfaces among those identified with Jesus? If so, you are probably considered strange by some. But you are duly noted and honored in heaven! You are also a part of the unique fellowship of the concerned ones.

The Prophecy of Daniel

THE FUTURE IS UNFOLDED TO DANIEL, #6

Lesson # 37

INTRODUCTION

An angel from heaven is revealing things to Daniel that have been written in “the Scriptures of Truth” – the book of Divine determinations. These are matters that pertain to the purpose of God, and He is working them together for the ultimate good of those who love Him, and are the called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). From yet another view, the angel is making known to Daniel future things that will befall his people, the Jews. Apart from these people – a chosen people – all of the events that are mentioned are incidental. They obtain significance only because they touched the people of God. It is imperative that we keep this in the foreground of our thought. If we do not, we will be drawn aside by the precision of these promises, and caused to marvel at the wrong thing.

A third perspective is that these events represent Satan’s attempt to remove the people from whom the promised Messiah would come. His ultimate objective was to thwart that coming, and he

began to pursue it with zeal immediately after God told him the woman's "Seed" would bruise, or crush, his head (Gen 3:15). The zeal with which he pursued this objective is a sort of backdrop to much of the history of God's people. A brief retracing of his initiative will serve to introduce this particular text. In all of the following circumstances two things can be seen. First, that Satan was craftily going about to stop the Messiah from entering into the world. Second, that he was impotent to fulfill that objective.

- Wicked Cain slays righteous Abel (Gen 4:8).
- The rapid spread of iniquity in the earth, caused by the intermarriage of the sons of God with the daughters of men (Gen 6:2-5).
- The unity of the people set to build the tower of Babel, thus departing from God and seeking to make a name for themselves (Gen 11:4-6)
- The barrenness of Sarah (Gen 11:30).
- The barrenness of Rebeckah (Gen 25:21).
- The barrenness of Rachel (Gen 29:31).
- The slaughtering of the Israelite innocents by Egypt (Ex 1:22).
- The murmuring of the Israelites en route to Canaan (Ex 15:24; 16:2; 17:3; Num 14:2; 16:41).
- The sin of Israel that was so grievous God said He would utterly destroy them (Ex 32:10).
- Israel believes the ten unfaithful spies, and refuses to take the promised land (Num 13:31-14:23).
- The barrenness of Manoah's wife, mother of Samson (Judges 13:2).
- The barrenness of Hannah, Samuel's mother (1 Sam 1:5-6).
- The frequent departures of Israel from God during the times of the Judges (Judges 2:11; 3:7,21; 4:1; 6:1; 10:6; 13:1).
- The sin of David with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:1-5)
- The times when various kings led Israel into grievous sins (1 Kgs 21:25-26; 2 Kgs 21:11; 2 Chron 24:17-18).

- The practice of idolatry among the Israelites (2 Kgs 17:7-12).
- The frequent times the Israelites intermarried with the heathen (Judges 3:5-6; 1 Kgs 11:1-5; Ezra 9:11; Neh 13:23-27).
- The barrenness of Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-7).
- The slaughter of the innocents by Herod (Matt 2:16).

In these, and other, cases, Satan craftily sought to undermine the purpose of God, focusing his attention on the nation through whom the promised Seed would come.

Now, Daniel is being told of other strategies of the devil to remove this chosen nation. Kings and nations will come against them – and that according to Divine intent.

For example, in the Babylonian captivity, God was punishing Israel. Yet, Satan sought to work in this circumstance to gain the advantage. He had seventy years, so to speak, to either liquidate the Jews, or so neutralize their strengths that they could never recover. He also had a time to remove the name of God from the earth – if he could do so. He failed miserably on every side. Instead of succeeding, two kings (Nebuchadnezzar and Darius) made global proclamations of the God of Israel, extolling Him and declaring His Person and ways (Dan 3:29-4:3; 6:25-27). The Lord also raised up Cyrus the Persian to rebuild the Temple of God in Jerusalem (2 Chron 36:22-23).

In the prophecy of the Grecian Empire and its demise (8:5-11:45), Daniel is told repeated attacks will be made against the land of Israel (8:9; 11:16,41). The Temple will be plundered several times (8:11,13; 11:31). From a human point of view, this would be enough to liquidate the Jews and obliterate the Temple service. However, God is the Governor among the nations. His purpose will not be thwarted. His people will not be eliminated. The Temple and its service will not be removed until a better sacrifice has been accomplished, and a sanctified and justified people become His dwelling place.

Even though the people of God would, because of their own iniquity, suffer many things, yet God's blueprint for humanity will continue on schedule. The Messiah will come in the fulness of the time (Gal 1:4). He will come from the very nation that has endured such grievous assaults. He will stand in the Temple, even though it was destroyed multiple times, and its services eliminated for seasons of time. Satan will not succeed. It is his purpose that will be cast down to the ground. God's counsel will stand, and His will be fulfilled (Isa 46:10). Those are matters on which you can reckon!

THE KING SPEAKS AGAINST THE GOD OF GODS

“ 11:36 And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.”

Some are of the opinion that this section speaks of a new personality, and is no longer speaking of Antiochus Epiphanes. They feel this is the “Antichrist” of whom John speaks (1 John 2:18), the “man of sin,” of whom Paul speaks (2 Thess 2:3), and “the false prophet” mentioned in the book of the Revelation (Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Some are persuaded it is also “the beast” of Revelation (Rev 13:11-18), and still others believe it refers to the Romans, who supplanted the Greek Empire. CALVIN

There may very well be a type of “the man of sin” seen in this king, but this does not seem to be the thrust of the passage. For the following reasons, I will consider this passage to refer immediately to Antiochus Epiphanes. It also contains several principles that may be applied to opponents of the body of Christ.

- There is no noticeable shift in the subject. Nothing in the text suggests the angel is speaking of another king, having left off speaking of Antiochus. The heavenly messenger has always made clear when he begins speaking of another personality: “and another shall rise after them . . . shall one stand up in his estate . . . Then shall stand up in his estate . . . And in his estate shall stand up a vile person . . .” (7:24; 11:7,20,21).
- Nothing in the text indicates there has been a conclusion in considering the Grecian Empire.
- The “king of the South” is later said to come against him (v 40), thus substantiating we are still speaking of Egypt and Syria).
- It is more reasonable to consider the conclusion of this passage (v 45) as speaking of the ultimate fall of Epiphanes. If this is not the case, then one of the key opponents of the people of God is not declared to have been overthrown. This does not fit in with the rest of the revelations given to Daniel. The “notable horn” (Alexander the Great) was broken (8:8; 11:4). a “king of fierce countenance” (a previous reference to Antiochus Epiphanes) is said to be “broken without hand” (8:25). It is, in my opinion, unreasonable to have a sudden change of subjects without accounting for the overthrow of a king who so viciously opposed the city, Temple, and people of God.

Right here I say a word about, what I choose to call, “template theology.” This is a theology, or view of God and His work, that is constructed by men. Some will use scattered and vague texts to build their view. Others construct it from implications, verb tenses, and even hoary church traditions. Once such a “template” is formed, it is, so to speak, placed upon the Bible. The Scriptures are then read through this theological template. In the view of the reader, this causes the Bible to conform to the human view that has been adopted.

There is more of this sort of thing within the professed church than we dare to imagine. Wherever such a practice is found, great damage is done to the souls of men. This is so because the attention of the heart is turned from what God has said to what men think He has meant – and there is a vast difference between the two.

When it comes to the subject of “the Antichrist,” “the man of sin,” “the false prophet,” and “the beast,” very little specific information has been revealed by God. Most will agree with this.

- There are four verses in all of the Bible that mention the term “Antichrist” (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). None of those texts dwell on the Antichrist himself, but also declare the presence of “many antichrists” and “the spirit of antichrist,” and those who do not confess Jesus Christ is come in the flesh as being a “deceiver and an antichrist.”
- There is a single reference in all of the Bible to “the man of sin” (2 Thess 2:3). We are told he will be revealed in connection with a “falling away,” and that he will exalt himself above all that is called God, showing himself to be God.
- “The false prophet,” as a single individual, is mentioned three times in Scripture (Rev 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). Demonic spirits and miraculous workings are said to come from him. He also deceives those who received the mark of the beast, and is eventually cast into the lake of fire.
- “The beast” in Revelation is particularly the “second” beast which had “two horns like a lamb,” but “spake as a dragon” (Rev 13:11-18; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2,10-13). This beast does great wonders, deceives the world by miracles, and causes “all” to receive a “mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.” Another beast is mentioned in Revelation that is particularly distinguished from “the false prophet” (17:7-17; 19:19-20; 20:4,20).

No inspired man has ever put all of these concepts together, then formulated a concise end-time doctrine. There is a certain vagueness that pervades all of these texts, and it appears to me that this Divinely intentional. Yet, an astounding amount of humanly-developed theology is being promulgated in the Christian community about “the Antichrist” – just as though a precise and clear revelation had been given on the subject.

It is my opinion that much of this theology is a sort of mold into which men attempt to pour the book of Daniel. Too much of this sort of theology has been adopted by people who have little knowledge of the text of Daniel. In fact, they know their canned theology far better than they know the Word of God. Such things ought not to be.

God Desires to Be Known

I am deliberately taking care to avoid such a handling of the Word of God. I will gravitate to the most obvious meaning, and seek to declare the principles made known in the text as best as I am able. Some of the details of this text may very well remain rather mysterious. However, we cannot afford to allow the glimpses of God, His manner, and His purpose, that are revealed in this text to remain obscure.

God primarily desires that He Himself be known (Jer 9:24-25). If that is not accomplished, all other knowledge is voided, and eternal benefits are forfeited. In “flaming fire,” the returning Christ will “take vengeance on them that know not God ” (2 Thess 1:8). There is no greater resource in appropriating this knowledge than the Scriptures in general, and the Gospel of Christ in particular. As elementary as it may appear, the Scriptures are more of an index to God and His purpose than to future events that will take place in this world. To be sure, they do speak of things that are coming upon the earth – both events and personalities. However, their inclusion in Scripture is intended to acquaint us with the Living God Himself, not merely the affairs of this present evil world.

The “knowledge of God” is the appointed means through which spiritual resources are administered to us (2 Pet 1:3). Thus it is written, “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6). A failure to know God is serious beyond all imagination.

HE WILL DO ACCORDING TO HIS WILL

“And the king shall do according to his will . . .” Other versions read, “ THEN the king shall do according to his own will,” NKJV “ THEN the king will do as he pleases,” NASB

The use of the word “then,” or “and” KJV,DARBY,DOUAY,Septuagint confirms this text is a continuation of thoughts regarding Antiochus Epiphanes, the “king of the North.” The Contemporary English Version reads “ This king” (versus “another”king). In addition to the clear implications of the text, these translations suggest that even the grammar of the text indicates it is proper to apply it to the king previously mentioned – Antiochus Epiphanes.

According to His Will

As soon as we read these words, regardless of the mortal to whom they apply, we know that a wicked person is the subject. The Persian Empire, portrayed as a pushing and forceful ram, is said to

have done “according to his will ” (Dan 8:4). A mighty Persian king, Xerxes, is said to have stood up, did “according to his will,” and his kingdom was “broken” (Dan 11:3). The essence of sin is selfwill. This is the exact opposite of the incarnate Word who prayed, “NOT my will” (Luke 22:42).

We will find that when this king, whom I take to be Antiochus Epiphanes, did “according to his will,” it was never anything good, noble, helpful, or commendable. In the beginning Satan exalted his own will above that of God (Isa 14:12-13; Ezek 28:13-17). His children all have this same trait, seeking their own will above the will of the Lord. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-16) are all expressions of self will – and they are all condemned.

The will of this king will result in opposition to God, His Law, and His people. It is the prelude to an attack against godly ordinances, and the vaunting of false gods. A person who seeks their own will eventually must oppose God, His ordinances, and His people.

In Our Day

The time in which we are living is one that cries out for a generation of people to arise who will shout, “The will of the Lord be done” (Acts 21:14), and that will fervently pray, “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10).

HE WILL EXALT AND MAGNIFY HIMSELF

“ . . . and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god . . .” Other versions read, “consider himself greater than any god,” NRSV “lifting himself over every gods,” BBE “magnify himself against all that is god,” GENEVA , Septuagint and “claiming to be greater than every god there is.” NLT

Contrary to the practices of all conquerors before him, Antiochus commanded that those over whom he ruled abandon their gods, serving the ones he dictated they were to serve. This even applied to the Jews. The book of First Maccabees records, “Moreover king Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom, that all should be one people, And every one should leave his laws: so all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king.” 1 Macc 1:41-42 Second Maccabees refers to him as “the murderer and blasphemer.”

2 Macc 9:28

HE WILL SPEAK AGAINST GOD

“ . . . and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods . . .” Other versions read, “shall speak blasphemies against,” NKJV “speak monstrous things against,” NASB and “say unheard things against.” NIV

Drunk with power, Antiochus chose to speak against the God of heaven. Earlier in Daniel,

Gabriel spoke of this very king as standing “up against the Prince of princes” (8:25). Like the “little horn” of Daniel 7:25 and “the beast” of Revelation 13:5, he was given “a mouth speaking great things.” Like Israel in a state of great decline, his words were “stout against” the Lord (Mal 3:13).

I understand these words to have been addressed specifically to Israel – particularly in Antiochus’ prohibitions of

the worship of God. First Maccabees records the following concerning his edicts. “For the king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Juda that they should follow the strange laws of the land, And forbid burnt offerings, and sacrifice, and drink offerings, in the temple; and that they should profane the sabbaths and festival days: And pollute the sanctuary and holy people. Set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts: That they should also leave their children uncircumcised, and make their souls abominable with all manner of uncleanness and profanation: To the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances. And whosoever would not do according to the commandment of the king, he said, he should die. In the selfsame manner wrote he to his whole kingdom, and appointed overseers over all the people, commanding the cities of Juda to sacrifice, city by city. Then many of the people were gathered unto them, to wit every one that forsook the law; and so they committed evils in the land; And drove the Israelites into secret places, even wheresoever they could flee for succour. Now the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar, and builded idol altars throughout the cities of Juda on every side; And burnt incense at the doors of their houses, and in the streets. And when they had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire. And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament, or if any committed to the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death. Thus did they by their authority unto the Israelites every month, to as many as were found in the cities.” 1 Macc 1:44-58

The angel views these various decrees as words spoken against “the God of gods,” for whoever opposes what God has said, opposes God Himself.

An Inevitable Action for the Godless

This is an inevitable action for those who exalt themselves and seek their own will. Because such an attitude is contrary to reality, they must eventually oppose and speak against the God of heaven. It may take the blasphemous form of Pharaoh’s words: “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice” (Ex 5:2). It may take the form of a challenge, like that of Sennacherib: “Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?” (2 Kgs 18:35).

The Character of Satan

In this matter, the character of Satan is seen in his children – “the children of the wicked one” (Matt 13:38). They think nothing of speaking against God and the things related to Him. That covers everything from His Law and His people, to His Son, and the Gospel, also called “the record He has given of His Son” (1 John 5:10-11). Such malignments are never innocent or inadvertent. They always proceed from a puffed up mind, self exaltation, and self will.

UNTIL THE INDIGNATION IS ACCOMPLISHED

“ . . . and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished . . . ” Other versions read that he will prosper “till the wrath has been accomplished,” NKJV “until the indignation is finished,” NASB and

“until the time of wrath is completed.” NIV

This is the time of God’s indignation with wayward Israel. Their sin and indifference toward God has brought on this terrible judgment.

This is the same language employed in the description of the Babylonian captivity. In that captivity, the Assyrians were instruments of God’s indignation. As it is written, “ O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation . I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets” (Isa 10:5-6). The cessation of their oppression is depicted in these words, “For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction” (Isa 10:25).

Again, God refers to the invasion of Babylon itself as a time of His indignation. “The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see . . . They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the LORD, and the weapons of His indignation , to destroy the whole land” (Isa 13:1,5).

Isaiah further comments concerning a period of great distress brought upon Israel. Speaking to the elect within that nation, God says, “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast ” (Isa 26:20).

This is prophetic language describing God’s reaction when flagrant sin and transgression is found in His people. There are so many examples of this that it should not be needful to provide a lengthy exposition of the subject. The following expressions will suffice to buttress this point.

- “Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against His people , insomuch that He abhorred his own inheritance” (Psa 106:40).
- “When God heard this, He was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel : So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand. He gave His people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance” (Psa 78:59-62).
- “And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel , and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies” (Judges 2:14).
- “Therefore the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel , and He sold them into the hand of

Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years” (Judges 3:8).

- “Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the LORD saw it, He abhorred them , because of the provoking of His sons, and of His daughters” (Deut 32:18-19).
- “For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation ” (Luke 19:43-44).

If any among the unlearned should rise and affirm God no longer reacts in such a manner, let the following be considered.

- God removed Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-10).
- God judged some at Corinth by sending sickness and death upon some who conducted themselves unacceptably at the Lord’s table (1 Cor 11:30).
- Judgment begins with the house of God (1 Peter 4:17).
- Jesus told the false prophetess and her followers at Thyatira that He would “kill her children with death” (Rev 2:23).
- The Spirit challenges the churches to consider the futility of provoking the Lord to jealousy, for we are not stronger than He (1 Cor 10:21-22).

This Must Be Seen

It is imperative that we learn from the text we are considering. The ferocity with which Jerusalem and the Temple service were attacked by Antiochus Epiphanes was owing to the spiritual lethargy among the people of God. This reaction of the Lord was not a strange one. From the very beginning of Israel’s history, repeatedly His response to Israel’s sin was made known in the wilderness by plagues, serpents, and pestilence.

The word of the Spirit to the churches is forthright, and we do well to take it into our hearts and minds. “Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense , saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his

people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ” (Heb 10:29-31). It seems to me that the modern church needs to hear this!

A spirit of lethargy has come over the church just as surely as it did over Israel. If people do not detect it and flee from it, they will not be able to avoid the judgment of the Almighty.

IT IS DETERMINED

“ . . . for that that is determined shall be done.” Other versions read, “for that which is decreed will be done, ” NASB “for what has been determined must take place” NIV and “for what has been purposed will be done.” BBE

Such language can only apply to the Lord Himself, for unalterable determinations can only be made by Him. Also, it must be remembered that God does nothing “without cause” (Ezek 14:23). A time of indignation was appointed against Jerusalem and its inhabitants because of their indifference against their God. That indignation was to be carried out in part by Antiochus Epiphanes. However, it would have an appointed conclusion – a determined termination. Wicked rulers will not realize the fulfillment of their own ambition. It is God alone who without fail does “according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Dan 4:35). The text before us is wrapped in that reality.

As I have already said, there are some who believe there is a massive time gap between verses thirty-five and thirty-six. It is also seen as the other imagined time-gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week of Daniel (Dan 9:24). Like this prophesy, the seventy week prophecy pertained to Daniel’s people, not the church. Those who embrace this view see this verse as applying to Rome, who ravaged the church for over three hundred years. If this was the case, the “wrath” or “indignation” would not be God’s wrath, but the wrath of Rome. This view, however, falls to the ground in view of this final expression. This is something that has been determined by God. Also, the prophecy relates to Daniel’s people, who are not synonymous with the body of Christ.

HE WILL MAGNIFY HIMSELF

“ 37 Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.”

This text is used by some to oppose the idea that Antiochus Epiphanes is the subject of the prophecy. The reason for this opposition is that Antiochus, they say, did not ignore the god of his fathers. In fact, he built temples to Jupiter and Zeus, both of whom were honored by the Greeks. In this regard, the following has been written of him.

“Jupiter (the Latin form of the Greek name Zeus, the principal deity of the Greek and Roman mythology, in which he is fabled to have been the son of Saturn and Ops. He is supposed to represent the fertilizing power of the heavens) . . . Antiochus Epiphanes, as related by Athenaeus, surpassed all other kings in his worship and veneration of the gods, so that it was impossible to count the number of the statues he erected. His especial favorite was Zeus. The Olympian Zeus was the national god of the Hellenic race (Thucydides, 3, 14), as well as the supreme ruler of the heathen world, and, as such, formed the true opposite to Jehovah, who had revealed himself as the God of Abraham. Antiochus commenced, in B.C. 174, the completion of the temple of Zeus Olympius at Athens (Polybius, Reliq. 26, 10; Livy, Hist. 41, 20), and associated the worship of Jupiter with that of Apollo at Daphne, erecting a statue to the former god resembling that of Phidias at Olympia (Amm. Marcell. 22, 13, 1). McClintok and Strongs

On the surface, this does appear to rule out Antiochus Epiphanes as the subject of our text. However, the angel elaborates on his statement concerning the king’s disregard for the god of his fathers, which elaboration will clarify what is intended.

Having said this, I do not deny that Antiochus is a type of Satan’s oppression of the people of God, and of those rulers through whom he has and will work. Notwithstanding, this is not a matter about which I will be contentious.

HE WILL NOT REGARD THE GOD OF HIS FATHERS

“Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god . . .” Other versions read, “he shall show no regard for the gods of his fathers.” NASB

Throughout this prophecy, Antiochus is regarded as “the king of the North,” which was Syria. His “fathers” were also kings of Syria, one of the four divisions of the Grecian Empire. Ancient gods of Syria are identified as Baalim and Ashtaroth (Judges 10:6). Rather than honoring the Syrian gods, Antiochus promoted the gods of the Greeks, doing even that with a measure of disdain. He also thought nothing imposing other gods upon his own people.

The reference to “the desire of women” is quite vague. Some have taken it to mean that he shunned marriage. I take this to refer to his disregard for the gods. The Syrian deity Tammuz-Adonis, was called “the desire of women.” F.W Farrar I am not sure about the particulars of this prophecy, but take it to refer primarily to ancient idols. Some say this refers to the moon, referred to by idolaters as “the Queen of heaven” in Scripture (Jer 7:18; 44:17-19,25). In Syrian culture, this was female form of the idol Baal. McClintok and Strong To the Shemites this goddess was also known as Ashtaroth, mentioned in Judges 2:13, together with “the gods of Syria.” The Babylonian goddess Venus is also said to have had the title “the mistress of heaven and earth.” McClintok and Strong

There is an historical incident recorded in McClintok and Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical Knowledge that also fits into this picture. "Hearing not long afterward of the riches of a temple of Nanaea ('the desire of women,' (Daniel 11:37) in Elymais (1 Maccabees 6:1 sq.; see Wernsdorf, Defide Maccab. p. 58 sq.), hung with the gifts of Alexander, he (Antiochus Epiphanes) resolved to plunder it." Page 170

Some see this reference as applying to the promotion of celibacy within papal Rome. While there may be some element of truth to this, it seems to me to be forcing something foreign into the text. I view this as referring to the refusal of Antiochus to honor the traditional gods of his own people. However, this is not a critical point. It is enough to say that this king was not noted for personal religious devotion. This will be made clear in the next expression.

HE WILL MAGNIFY HIMSELF

" . . . for he shall magnify himself above all." Other versions read, "exalt himself above them all," NKJV, NIV and "he will consider himself greater than all" NRSV

The Essence of Religion

It is the peculiar prerogative of any religion to de-emphasize self. In fact, that is the essence of religion – it is the acknowledgment of dependency on an entity greater than self. By definition, "religion" is "the service and worship of God." MERRIAM-WEBSTER As used in Scripture, the word "religion" has two meanings, taken from two different words. "Religion," taken from the Greek word **Vioudai?smw /** (Ioudaismos) is used in Galatians 1:13-14, and means "the Jew's religion, Judaism, and the Jewish faith and worship." STRONG'S "Religion" is also used in Acts 26:5, and James 1:26-27. There is taken from the Greek word **qrhskei,aj** (threskeia), which means "religious worship, especially external, that consists of ceremonies and religious discipline." STRONG'S and THAYER

While many idolaters are noted for self-indulgence, they often do so in the name of their god, professing to be serving their god in their indulgent conduct.

But this king was not noted for his religion, or devotion to any god. While he built temples to Jupiter and Zeus, he exalted himself to the role of God – he "magnified himself above all." On the mint of his kingdom, he placed an image of himself on one side (portraying himself as Zeus), with an image of the false god Jupiter on the other side holding the goddess Nike (victory), adding the titles " Of King Antiochus , THEOS (meaning "god"), Epiphanes (meaning "the manifest, light, and splendid one" – a title normally ascribed to heathen deities) and Nicephoros " (meaning "bearing victory").

History confirms that this wicked king magnified himself to the position of deity, demanding the honor accompanying that claim. Because of this, the Jews were particularly reprehensible to him, for they were known for worshiping the one true God. Thus, they represented a particular threat to his boastful claim. His conduct toward them and their worship is representative of the conflict between

Satan and the God who has cursed him.

In order to confirm the wickedness of this king, I provide the perspective of the modern Jews themselves. This quotation is taken from the Jewish Encyclopedia, and was written by Louis Ginzberg. To this very day, orthodox Jews are mindful of this king, classing him along with Hitler. The full article, together with other information, can be accessed on the following website:

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1589&letter=A>

HE WILL HONOR THE GOD OF FORCES

“ 38 But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.”

While enthroned, this king will honor a certain God, although he will not be altogether consistent in that honor. Remember, he has exalted himself above everything else. Any honor given to other gods is only a marginal, and will not allow for the dethronement or minimization of himself.

THE GOD OF FORCES

“But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces . . .” Other versions read, “But in their place shall he shall honor the god of fortresses,” NKJV “But instead he will honor a god of fortresses,” NASB and “He shall honor a god of fortresses instead of these.” NRSV

The words “his estate” has a twofold meaning. From the earthly point of view, they refer to the position his father’s gods occupied. Instead of those Syrian gods, he honored “the God of forces,” or “the God of fortresses.” From heaven’s point of view, it refers to the Almighty God Himself. That is, this king would, in his own thought, assign the position which God alone occupies to another god – “the God of forces.” In a place identified with the God of heaven, Antiochus would give honor to “the God of forces.”

This false god, as I understand it, was Jupiter (the Latin form of the Greek “ Zeus ”). He was supposed to represent the “fertilizing power of the heavens.” McClintok and Strong The name “Jupiter” means “god of bulwarks,” or fortresses. Antiochus Epiphanes introduced this god to the Syrians, who never before honored it. He erected a temple to this god in his capital city of Antioch, adorning it with

all manner of gold, silver, and precious stones. However, the temple was never completed.

The real transgression of this wicked king took place when he dared to erect an idol altar to this god upon the very altar of God – the altar of burnt offerings. “Antiochus, after compelling the Jews to call the Temple of Jerusalem **THE TEMPLE OF JUPITER OLYMPIUS** , built an idol altar upon the altar of God. Upon this altar swine were offered every day, and the broth of their flesh was sprinkled about the Temple.” McClintok and Strong

He Shall Honor

“ . . . and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.”

I understand this to refer to Antiochus’ attempt to build a temple to Jupiter, adorned with all manner of precious metals, stones, and the likes. In his renovation of Antioch, the following is said of this king. “Even before he had begun his reign he had contributed to the building of the temple of Zeus (Latin form of Jupiter) in Athens and to the adornment of the theatre. He enlarged Antioch on the Orontes by adding a section to the city (named Epiphania afterhim). There he built an aqueduct, a council hall, a marketplace, and a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus.” BRITANNICA 2003 Another resource reads, “But he also adorned Delos with inscribed altars & an abundance of statues. And at Antioch (he erected) a magnificent temple to Capitoline Jove [=Jupiter], not only with a ceiling lined with gold but with walls completely covered with gilded panels. And he did not complete many other (projects) promised to other places, since his reign was very brief.”

INTO HIS OWN, by MAHLON H. SMITH, 1999

The extravagance of Antiochus’ building exploits remains a source of historical wonder. Although himself not a deeply religious man, he took great delight in building temples to gods his fathers did not know. However, he chose to exalt himself even above them.

A STRANGE GOD

“ 39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.”

Here we will see the aggression of this evil king. He not only came against Jerusalem, sacking the Temple and slaying thousands of Jews, he also sought to thoroughly change their religion. He devoted the city to a strange God, and enforced the worship of that God among the chosen people of God.

It is imperative that we have our spiritual bearings when we approach texts of this sort, else history will throw dust in our eyes. This is a period of Divine “indignation” (verse 36). It would come on the chosen people because of their sloppy and indolent spiritual manners. If anyone imagines the way of transgressors is not “hard” (Prov 13:15), let them seriously ponder the ravages of Antiochus Epiphanes. If spiritual naivety blinds the heart to such considerations, then let them ponder specific revealed judgments against sin.

- The fall of humanity (Gen 3:16-19).
- The flood (Gen 6-7).
- The scattering at Babel (Gen 11).
- The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19).
- The Babylonian captivity (Hab 1:6-10).
- The destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 19:43-44).

Although I have often said this in these lessons, it is appropriate to say it once again. “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). If this message fails to come through to our hearts, we will gain very little from the text before us.

A STRANGE GOD AND STRONGHOLDS

“Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god . . .” Other versions read, “Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god,” NKJV “And he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god,” NASB “And he will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god,” NIV and “Claiming this foreign god's help, he will attack the strongest fortresses.” NLT

The meaning of the text is that this king came against and defeated the most fortified cities, including Sidon, Pelusloun, and Memphis. Primarily, however, the reference is to Jerusalem that was especially fortified. This king further imported the worship of Jupiter Capitolinus into the strong cities that he conquered.

In his boastful pride, Antiochus drew honor to himself and the false god whom he honored with temples, altars, and images. Actually, however, his success was owing to God’s dispensation of power to

him because of the transgression of His people. As soon as the time of indignation, or chastening, was over, Antiochus' power would quickly dissipate and disappear.

HE WILL ACKNOWLEDGE AND INCREASE WITH GLORY

“ . . . whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory . . . ” Other versions read, “which he shall acknowledge and advance its glory,” NKJV “he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him,” NASB “and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him,” NIV and “Those who acknowledge him, he shall make more wealthy.” NRSV

There are a variety of views promoted by the various translations.

- The king would acknowledge the false god and promote his glory by building temples and statues to it.
- The king would advance those who gave honor to the false God, increasing their wealth and glory.
- The king would give special honor to those who honored himself, causing them to become wealthy.

Once again, we must get our spiritual bearings, remembering what has been said about this king, whom, historically, I take to be Antiochus Epiphanes.

The whole point of the text is the self-exaltation of this king. He own will, not the will of a god, was the determining factor in what he did: “The king shall do according to his will.” He would “magnify himself above every god, and shall speak things against the God of gods” (v 36). The text, therefore, cannot mean that he was focusing all of the attention upon the god that he promoted. That promotion was a deceptive one – an attempt to change the culture of the people. In so doing, he would make them a Grecian province with Grecian manners. In so doing He would also destroy the religion of the Jews.

The truth of the matter is that Antiochus only promoted those who exalted himself. He was the focus of his own attention, and the object of all of his efforts. He did not work for the glory of Greece or the glory of Jupiter. He sought his own glory. That is why the angel said he exalted himself and magnified himself.

HE WILL CAUSE THEM TO RULE OVER MANY

“ . . . and he shall cause them to rule over many . . . ” Other versions read, “he will make them rulers over many people,” NIV “and shall appoint them as rulers over many,” NRSV “he will make them rulers over the mass of the people.” BBE and “He will honor those who submit to him, appointing them to positions of authority.” NLT

These people ranged from Grecian mercenaries, placed in the cities to hellenize the people, to those Jews who gave their allegiance to him. The particular emphasis is placed upon the country of Palestine, and the city of Jerusalem.

Because, as a whole, the Jews had forsaken the Lord, others, who did not seek their interest, were appointed over them. Before they entered into the promised land, Moses declared such things would happen to the people if they refused to follow the Lord. “And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: and your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits” (Lev 26:15-20).

Thus, during the inter-testamental period, the Word of the Lord continued to be dominant and to be fulfilled, even though there was no known prophet among the people.

HE WILL DIVIDE THE LAND FOR GAIN

“ . . . and shall divide the land for gain.” Other versions read, “parcel out land for a price,” NASB “distribute the land at a price,” NIV and “dividing the land among them as their reward.” NLT

The meaning is that Antiochus distributed the land to those who served him. This he did for personal gain, selling it, as it was, to the highest bidder. It can also mean that land was distributed to them for their own gain, because of their compliance with the will of Antiochus. The particular land of reference was “the land of the Jews,” God’s own land. Other countries and cities were incidental, for the angel is making known what will “befall” Daniel’s “people” (10:13). First Maccabees says of this, “To wit, that he should send an army against them, to destroy and root out the strength of Israel, and the remnant of Jerusalem, and to take away their memorial from that place; 3:36 And that he should place strangers in all their quarters, and divide their land by lot.” 1 Macc 3:35-36

AN APPLICATION

How does Satan make inroads among the people of God? We are to watch and be vigilant – for what should we be alert? As in the case of Antiochus, who sought to change the culture of God’s people, this is still one of the primary methods employed by the devil. He seeks to change the culture of the people of God – to alter how they think and how they speak. He seeks to impose upon them the template of this present evil world, so that they have a different reason for living, and differing means of

expressing themselves.

He will take the word of God and tempt men to think differently about it. Take, for example, the temptation of Eve. The “old serpent” led Eve to think differently about the word of the Lord. At the first, she concluded it was best not to even touch the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That is the impact the Word of God had upon her. But after her dialog with the devil, she thought it would be to her advantage to eat what God had commanded her not to eat. God said if she ate she would “surely die.” After reasoning with the devil, she concluded she would not die (Gen 2:17; 3:1-6).

Satan undertook the same ploy with Jesus. He tempted Him to view the Word of God from the standpoint of personal advantage: “If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone” (Matt 4:6). Jesus did not yield to the Tempter, refusing to change the way He thought about the Word of God, which lives and abides forever. The devil’s conclusion was not the one God intended to provoke by that word, and Jesus refused to proceed as though it was proper.

ANOTHER APPLICATION

There is a principle revealed in this text that we must see. When the people of God drift from Him, choosing their own will and ways over His, judgment will begin at His house. This is the manner in which our God works. As it is written, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Pet 4:17)! What I am about to say is my own persuasion – and a strong one at that.

Changing the Religion of a People

Antiochus was not the last of Satan’s effort to change the religion of the people. In his time, those Jews who refused to stand on the side of truth, were swept up in the delusion of that wicked king. His success was directly traceable to the spiritual lethargy of God’s people – just as it was with Nebuchadnezzar.

We are living in a time of dramatic religious change. A new face is being put on “the church of the living God,” and it is not a good one. Successful churches, we are being led to believe, are mega-churches. They have large staffs, community programs, credentialed leaders, and polished Sunday performances. Their icons are youthful musicians, administrative organizers, psychological experts, and the likes. Many churches are financial empires with impressive campuses. They are more noted for their buildings than for their members, and for their appearance than their accomplishments.

The thrust has been turned from taking in and imbibing truth, to shallow expressions that do not come from the heart. Edification has been replaced by entertainment, and speaking to one another

in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, has been replaced by shallow praise and worship services. The Word of God has been replaced by discourses that are saturated with the wisdom of this world.

The religion of the people has been changed! Experts in Scripture are no longer needed. Powerful proclaimers and expositors are not in vogue. It is a new day, like the day of Antiochus Epiphanes in Jerusalem. He hellenized the Jews, causing them to adopt the ways of the Greeks. In our time, men are forcing the adoption of the ways of the world – and the world has rushed into the church like a mighty flood. Pure hearts, holiness, purged consciences, and bodies that are living sacrifices are not common. The Christianity of our time promotes casualness, brevity, soulless expressions, and spiritual ignorance.

This is, in my view, a time of Divine judgment. Because the professed church has largely rejected “the love of the truth,” God has sent “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie,” and the masses have not been able to survive that lie (2 Thess 2:9-11). It has come in the form of psychological babble, marital expertise, institutional building, financial planning, and educational priorities.

I am aware that it is not popular to speak of such things, but someone must speak of them. We are living in a time when the walls are in a state of disrepair, as they were in the days of Nehemiah. It is a time when the book of God is lost, as it was in the days of Josiah. The people of God have mingled with the world, as they did in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Consequently, this is the time of the “remnant,” when here and there clusters of people can be found that refuse to be absorbed into a religious system that has the spot of the world upon it. You are blessed if you have found some of them. It is a time to “stand fast,” and “quit like men.” These are, indeed, “perilous times.”

THE KINGS OF THE SOUTH AND THE NORTH

“ 40 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.”

This verse confirms we are still speaking of the demise of the Grecian Empire. The South is Egypt, and the North is Syria, as previously referenced (11:6,7,8,9,11,13,14,15,25). While this text may very well contain types of “the man of sin” mentioned in Second Thessalonians 2:3, that is not the primary reference of this passage. Care must be taken not to force the text into the theological systems of men, else the message of the text will be lost. Divine thoughts cannot be contained in the theological systems invented by men. As soon as men circumscribe the truth of God by stuffing it into their own systems, it loses both its message and its power.

Once again, I want to state certain principles that are directing the manner in which I review this text.

- First, these are things that were to “befall” Daniel’s people (10:13).
- Second, they have to do with preparations for the coming of the Messiah (9:25-26).

THE PUSHING KING OF THE SOUTH

“And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him . . .” Other versions read, “And at the end time the king of the South will collide with him ,” NASB “At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle ,” NIV and “At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him .” NRSV

The Time of the End

The “end” of reference is not the end of time itself, or the closing period of human history. Rather, this is specifically the end of the Grecian Empire, and the end of the dominance of human kingdoms in general. God had already revealed the following concerning His own initiative through the Messiah. “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan 2:44). The term “these kings,” refers to Babylon, the Medes and the Persians, Grecia, and Rome. Already Daniel has actually seen the demise of Babylon and the dominance of the Medes and Persians (5:31). He has also been told of the overthrow of the Medes and Persians by Greece (8:1-7). The kingdom of Greece was diminished with the removal of Alexander the Great, or the “notable horn” (8:8). It was further reduced in power by being divided into four parts (8:8,22; 11:4). The demise continued as the focus became only two kingdoms – Syria and Egypt, or the North and the South. These two kingdoms engaged in continual warfare with one another, further chronicling the end of the Grecian Empire.

The expression “time of the end” speaks of the conclusion of the events that have been determined by heaven. It would be equivalent to saying, “at the appointed time, when all would be fulfilled.” To say it another way, the end of the distress that is being described – the things that would befall Daniel’s people.

Now an additional conflict is found between these two kingdoms – with the land of Israel between them. The terms “North” (as applied to Syria) and “South” (as applied to Egypt) are defined by the “holy land.” Syria was North of the Jew’s land, and Egypt was South of it.

The King of the South

Now “the king of the South” (Egypt) engages in an initiative against “the king of the North” (Syria). Remember, the Grecian Empire is in its death throes, and Rome is waiting to assume the dominance of the world. None of the kingdoms involved know this is what is happening. They do not

know these things are written in “the scriptures of Truth.” However, hundreds of years before the events will actually take place, these Divine determinations are being revealed to Daniel.

When the prophecy comes to pass, Egypt will be under the joint control of Philometor and his brother Physkon. They will unite to attack Antiochus, who had previously defeated them.

The Difficulty

The difficulty encountered in this passage is that history (with one exception) does not record a fourth conflict between Antiochus and Egypt. As a result, some serious theologians have said the passage applies to the Antichrist. In this case, it is supposed that the South refers to the Saracens, and the North to the Turks. These are said to afflict the Western part of the world, where the Antichrist is thought to have his seat. MEDE That is a most difficult alternative, for it requires a significant change in both subject and time in the text – without any explanation.

The Historical Exception

The historical exception to the above view is found in the writings of Porphyry, a celebrated heathen philosopher, born in 233 A.D. He was an avid opponent of Christianity. He wrote extensively on supposed discrepancies in Scripture. That extensive work is said to have been fifteen volumes, most of which has been destroyed.

Porphyry wrote that Antiochus actually did invade Egypt in the year in which he died – the eleventh year of his reign. Porphyry was so impressed with what he saw to be the literal fulfillment of this text, that he said it had to be written after the events actually took place. Thus, he surmised, Daniel did not write this book at all.

Admittedly, appealing to a writer like this to substantiate that Antiochus is the subject of our text, does not appear wise. One might liken it to a donkey speaking to a man who was being directed by God (Num 22:28-32), or unclean ravens bringing food to a holy prophet (1 Kgs 17:4-6).

I know of no place in Scripture that suggests the truth of God’s Word, whether historical or future, depends upon human assessment and records. If, for example, God had not told us about the fall of man, the judgment at Shinar, and a flood in which only eight inhabitants of the entire world survived, how would we ever have known of them? This is not to mention the miraculous birth of Isaac to an aged couple, the details of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, a virgin giving birth to the Savior of the world, and the day of Pentecost.

The unbroken nature of the eleventh chapter of Daniel suggests it is not wise to take sections of it and apply them to matters wholly unrelated to what has been unveiled – particularly what would

befall Daniel's people.

Another Possibility

There is also the possibility that this is a recapitulation of what has been said before. Things that would befall the Jews (10:13) covered a period from, Darius the Mede (11:1), through the conclusion of this specific oppression – a period of over three hundred and fifty years. The closing phase of that time was the era of Antiochus Epiphanes, who only reigned eleven years. Yet, in that period, such havoc was wreaked against the people of God as had scarcely been imagined possible. That period was “the time of the end.”

With this in mind, some have suggested verses 40-45 are a summation of the closing of Antiochus' despotic reign. The position does have some merit. Whatever view a person takes of this text, it should be one that allows a continuity of thought throughout the text. It should also have some significance in regard to Daniel's people. Also, it should have a prominent place for the “glorious land.”

LIKE A WHIRLWIND

“ . . . and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships . . . ” Other versions read, “the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen, and with many ships,” NASB “ but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships,” ESV and “ but the king of the north shall overwhelm him with chariots and horsemen and a great fleet.” NJB

If this is a summation of the aggression of Antiochus Epiphanes, this is a recap of the things first revealed in verses 13-14. This view coincides with that text, for it also represents the king of the North as reacting to the aggression of the king of the South. I concede, therefore, that this can refer to a fourth and final confrontation between Egypt and Syria. However, I cannot be dogmatic on this point. Nor, indeed, do I see a need to be dogmatic on this matter.

The angel is saying a final attempt will be made by Egypt to throw off the shackles of Syria. However, it will miserably fail, as they it will be overwhelmed. The remainder of the text, in my judgment, confirms the king of the North to be Antiochus Epiphanes.

HE SHALL ENTER INTO THE COUNTRIES

“ . . . and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.” Other versions read, “and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through,” NKJV “He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood,” NIV and “he will go through many lands like overflowing waters.” BBE

The idea is that Antiochus will beat down the nations around him. History refers to this effort as his attempt to hellenize these kingdoms, compelling them to adopt Grecian manners, and thus extended the Empire. However, Daniel is informed that God was in these things, being moved to indignation by the waywardness of His people. Seizing upon the opportunity afforded him, Satan is seeking to obliterate the Jews, thereby thwarting the entrance of the woman's promised "Seed" who would bruise his head and render him impotent.

Passing into other countries coincides with the taking of fenced cities of verse 14, which were in CoeloSyria, Palestine, and adjacent lands. It is also the kind of exploit described in verse 22.

The Overall Emphasis

While some of the details may not clear, the overall emphasis is that the enemy of the people of God would show no signs of weakness. There would be no outward reason to expect him to miserably fail, or to suddenly pass from the scene. In every way he seems superior to the people of God, heaping suffering and indignation upon them in increasing and repulsive measures – but that is before we put the God of heaven into the scenario!

HE WILL ENTER THE GLORIOUS LAND

“ 41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.”

As we move toward the conclusion of this wicked man's reign, it will appear as though he is having his own way, and cannot possibly be overcome. Once again, seeing this as a summation, a point is made of Antiochus entering into "the glorious land." It is as though God is arranging things so the faithful will clearly associate the fall of their enemy with the judgment of God.

THE GLORIOUS LAND

“He shall enter also into the glorious land . . .” Other versions read, “He will also enter the Beautiful Land.” NASB/NIV/NRSV

This is the land of Judea – “the land of the Jews” (Acts 10:39) and “the Lord's land” (Hos 9:3). This is the land in which God Himself chose to dwell – the “Sanctuary.” As it is written, “Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established” (Ex 15:17).

The battles Antiochus had with Egypt were incidental. The conquering of fenced cities and surrounding countries was also insignificant so far as the heavens were concerned. But when he thought to go into God's land – even though the people were being chastened for their failures – he was meddling. Like Nebuchadnezzar before him, he was going too far, using the occasion to make himself great. Habakkuk's word concerning Nebuchadnezzar applies in principle to Antiochus: "Then his purpose will be changed, over-stepping the limit; he will make his strength his god" (Hab 1:11). BBE He went too far, crossing over the line of Divine tolerance.

MANY COUNTRIES SHALL BE OVER THROWN

“ . . . and many countries shall be overthrown . . . ”

That is, countries, fortified cities, and people will be crushed in this campaign. Keep in mind, “the glorious land” is in the middle of all of this activity. It will become involved in the aggression of Antiochus, and the attempts of the king of the South to overthrow him. That is why all of these things are mentioned. This all started as retaliation against the king of the South who would “push” at him. But it would not be enough to merely thwart the aggression of Egypt. As anger is wont to do, the reaction of Antiochus would spill over into other areas.

These exploits, as I have already indicated, can very well be a summation of the details already given. The difference is that “the end” is here accented. That is, toward the end of the reign of Antiochus there would be a flurry of violent and aggressive activity – quite unlike the latter days of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.

The point is that there were continued efforts not only to keep the domain of Greece alive, but to both expand it, and bring all of its authority under one man, as it was with Alexander.

SOME WILL ESCAPE

“ . . . but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.”

As Antiochus made his way to Egypt along the Mediterranean Sea, he did not molest Edom, Moab, and Ammon. His wrath was initially against Egypt, but he could not pass the opportunity to invade the holy land. That is from his perspective. From the heavenly point of view, God was having indignation upon Israel for its coldness toward Him. Thus, Antiochus was successful in ravaging them. The text accounts for this in verse thirty-six. The Contemporary English Version reads, “Indeed, he will be successful until God is no longer angry with His people.” Were it not for that anger, Antiochus would

not have enjoyed such sweeping victories.

There is also evidence that these nations (Edom, Moab, and Ammon) joined with Antiochus in previous assaults against the Jews. In fact, the book of Maccabees says that is why Judas Maccabees (who cleansed the Temple) fought against them. “Then Judas fought against the children of Esau in Idumea at Arabattine, because they besieged Gael: and he gave them a great overthrow, and abated their courage, and took their spoils. Also he remembered the injury of the children of Bean, who had been a snare and an offence unto the people, in that they lay in wait for them in the ways.” 1 Macc 1:3-4

All three of these nations were also hostile toward the Jews. Thus they tended to side more with Antiochus, and he thus thought not of destroying them. Of their hostility toward the Jews, the book of Maccabees reads, “At that time also they builded up the mount Sion with high walls and strong towers round about, lest the Gentiles should come and tread it down as they had done before. And they set there a garrison to keep it, and fortified Bethsura to preserve it; that the people might have a defence against Idumea (Edom).” 1 Macc 4:60-61

Again we read, “Then Judas fought against the children of Esau in Idumea at Arabattine, because they besieged Gael: and he gave them a great overthrow, and abated their courage, and took their spoils. Also he remembered the injury of the children of Bean, who had been a snare and an offence unto the people, in that they lay in wait for them in the ways. He shut them up therefore in the towers, and encamped against them, and destroyed them utterly, and burned the towers of that place with fire, and all that were therein. Afterward he passed over to the children of Ammon, where he found a mighty power, and much people, with Timotheus their captain.” 1 Macc 5:3-8

From a temporal point of view, the “escape” of these nations can be accounted for from at least two perspectives. Over and above these perspectives, however, God was at work. Orchestrating the affairs of men for His own glory, and for the ultimate advantage of His people.

- It was not convenient for Antiochus to turn aside at that time.
- They had proved themselves inclined toward Antiochus, and also against the Jews.

THE LAND OF EGYPT WILL NOT ESCAPE

“ 42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.”

It will appear as though Antiochus is gathering strength and increasing his influence. However, we will soon find the activity is nothing more than the death throes of a tyrant who has served his purpose.

THE LAND OF EGYPT SHALL NOT ESCAPE

“He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.”

Here Antiochus is heralded as an invader of foreign lands. Of some of these final conquests history records, “Antiochus then mounted a campaign against the Parthians who were threatening the empire in the east, recovered the income from that area, forced Artaxias of Armenia—who had defected—to recognize his suzerainty, founded the city of Antioch on the Persian Gulf, set out on an expedition to the Arabian coast . . . ”
BRITANNICA 2003

A particular point is made of this: “Egypt shall not escape.” In a sense, it had escaped this king previously, having survived his assaults and continued as a competitive kingdom. As formerly declared, he conquered the great cities of Egypt, and even captured their king (11:25-28). “Polybius, in Athenaeus, relates that Antiochus, having got together abundance of wealth, by spoiling young Philometer, and breaking league with him, and by the contributions of his friends, bestowed a vast deal upon a triumph, in imitation of Paulus Aemilius, and describes the extravagance of it; here we are told how he got that money which he spent so profusely.”
MATTHEW HENRY

POWER OVER THE TREASURES AND PRECIOUS THINGS

“But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt . . . ”

The point here is plunder, or taking the spoils, rather than the shedding of blood. He had seized the fortresses of Egypt and captured their king. It is no marvel, then, that he had power over all of their valuable resources. Like the vessels of the Temple were given to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 1:2), so the treasures of Egypt were given to Antiochus Epiphanes. This included their agricultural land, structures, art, monuments, libraries, and even instruments of war. They were all at his disposal.

All of this tended to lull this monster into sleep, the lusts of his heart being satiated with the spoil of his enemies. However, he will shortly be jarred from his slumber by something that he hears.

THE LIBYANS AND ETHIOPIANS

“ . . . and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.” Other versions read, “the Libyans

and Ethiopians shall follow at his heels,” NKJV “with the Libyans and Ethiopians in submission,” NIV and “the Libyans and Ethiopians will be his servants.” NLT

These two nations were naturally allied with Egypt, so that when Egypt was dominated by Antiochus, so were they. Ezekiel paints a similar picture, speaking of Egypt being overcome, and Ethiopia and Lydia with it. “And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down. Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Cub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword” (Ezek 30:4-5).

It is a principle of Scripture that people either rise or fall with the people with whom they are allied and identified. Thus, Jesus said, “I the blind lead the blind, they both fall in the ditch” (Matt 15:14). On the other hand, one can receive “the reward of a prophet” by ministering to such an one (Matt 10:41).

When Epiphanes controlled the resources, he controlled the people. When he controlled the people, he controlled the countries. He did not dominate only by forceful dominion, therefore, but by controlling their resources. This principle is still in place in our time. The one who controls your resources controls you. To put another way, the one from whom you receive your supplies is your master. There are no exceptions to this rule.

TROUBLOUS TIDINGS FROM THE EAST AND THE NORTH

“ 44 But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.”

We now enter the section that will chronicle the end of “the king of the North,” Antiochus Epiphanes. God will employ a message to lure him to the place of his demise. It is much like the way God lured Ahab to the place appointed for his death.

The Example of Ahab

When the time came for Ahab’s overthrow, we are given a glimpse of a heavenly gathering. These

things were revealed to Micaiah the prophet. “And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee” (1 Kgs 22:20-23).

The outcome of it all confirms the effectiveness of the strategy. Ahab went to Ramothgilead with Jehosaphat, the king of Judah, to do battle with the king of Syria. Ahab said he would disguise himself, and told Jehosaphat to put on his kingly robes. Ahab then disguised himself and went to the battle. When the Syrian hosts saw Jehosaphat, they said, “Surely this is the king of Israel,” and “they turned aside to fight him.” When Jehosaphat cried out, they detected it was not Ahab, and stopped pursuing him. Meanwhile, a certain man drew his bow “at random,” and shot an aimless arrow into the air. The arrow “struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor.” That evening Ahab died – having been lured to the place of his appointed death (1 Kgs 22:29-37).

Now we will see a similar end has been arranged for Antiochus Epiphanes.

TROUBLESOME TIDINGS

“But tidings out of the East and out of the North shall trouble him . . .” Other versions read, “news from the East and the North shall trouble him,” NKJV “rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him,” NASB and “reports from the East and the North will alarm him.” NIV

Barnes says of this event, Antiochus “was called forth in a warlike expedition by tidings or reports from Parthia and Armenia — regions lying to the east and the north, and it was in this expedition that he lost his life, and that this series of historical events was closed. Lengerke says, Antiochus assembled an army to take vengeance on the Jews, who, after the close of the unfortunate campaign in Egypt, rose up, under the Maccabees, against Antiochus, 1 Macc. 3:10, following Then the intelligence that the Parthians in the east, and the Armenians in the north, had armed themselves for war against him, alarmed him.” BARNES NOTES

The book of First Maccabees records the following. “ Now when king Antiochus heard these things, he was full of indignation: wherefore he sent and gathered together all the forces of his realm, even a very strong army. He opened also his treasure, and gave his soldiers pay for a year, commanding them to be ready whensoever he should need them. Nevertheless, when he saw that the money of his treasures failed and that the tributes in the country were small, because of the dissension and plague, which he had brought upon the land in taking away the laws which had been of old time; He feared that he should not be able to bear the charges any longer, nor to have such gifts to give so liberally as he did before: for he had abounded above the kings that were before him. Wherefore, being greatly perplexed in his mind, he determined to go into Persia, there to take the tributes of the countries, and to gather much money So he left Lysias, a nobleman, and one of the blood royal, to oversee the affairs of the king from the river Euphrates unto the borders of Egypt: And to bring up his son Antiochus, until he came again. Moreover he delivered unto him the half of his forces, and the elephants, and gave him charge of all things that he would have done, as also concerning them that dwelt in Juda and Jerusalem: To wit, that he should send an army against them, to destroy and

root out the strength of Israel, and the remnant of Jerusalem, and to take away their memorial from that place. And that he should place strangers in all their quarters, and divide their land by lot. So the king took the half of the forces that remained, and departed from Antioch, his royal city, the hundred forty and seventh year and having passed the river Euphrates, he went through the high countries.” First Macc 3:27-37

GOING FORTH WITH FURY

“ . . . therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.” Other versions read, “he shall go forth with great fury to destroy and annihilate many,” NKJV and “with great fury to exterminate and utterly destroy many.” RSV

As the historical book of Maccabees also affirms, the intent of this man was to “destroy and root out the strength of Israel, and the remnant of Jerusalem, and to take away their memorial from that place.” 1 Macc 3:35

We will now see if he is able to implement his will. Until this time, he has realized much success in his ambitions against Israel. He had slain thousands of them, killing both women and children. He had renamed the Temple in honor of Jupiter, and placed a heathen idol to that false god on top of the altar of burnt offerings. How will he do now? Has he crossed the line?

HE WILL COME TO AN END

“ 45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.”

This is an example of how the Lord “removes” kings (Dan 2:21). Perusing the eleven years of this man’s reign, one might surmise such a removal to be high unlikely. But with God, “all things are possible” (Matt 19:26).

HE WILL PLANT THE TABERNACLES OF HIS PALACE

“And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain . . .” Other versions read, “And he will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain,” NASB and “He will halt between the glorious holy mountain and the sea and will pitch his royal tents there.” NLT

This expedition was a majestic one. The royal court, together with the military intelligence,

pitched their tents – their temporary headquarters – in the land of Judea! The sea was the Mediterranean, and the “glorious holy mountain” was no doubt the Temple Mount – Mount Zion (Psa 48:2,11; Isa 8:18). The traveling headquarters were near to Jerusalem, and Antiochus was bent on exterminating the people of God.

The phrase “between the seas” probably means between the Great Sea (the Mediterranean) and the Dead Sea. Now we will see what this king is able to do.

HE SHALL COME TO AN END

“ . . . yet he shall come to his end.”

Thus the career of this madman was brought to an abrupt conclusion. He did not die in battle, but of an illness, like Alexander the Great, and Herod. The account of his demise is also written in the eight chapter. “He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand” (8:25).

The book of First Maccabees gives the following account of the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. “About that time king Antiochus traveling through the high countries heard say, that Elymais in the country of Persia was a city greatly renowned for riches, silver, and gold; And that there was in it a very rich temple, wherein were coverings of gold, and breastplates, and shields, which Alexander, son of Philip, the Macedonian king, who reigned first among the Grecians, had left there. Wherefore he came and sought to take the city, and to spoil it; but he was not able, because they of the city, having had warning thereof, Rose up against him in battle: so he fled, and departed thence with great heaviness, and returned to Babylon. Moreover there came one who brought him tidings into Persia, that the armies, which went against the land of Judea, were put to flight: And that Lysias, who went forth first with a great power was driven away of the Jews; and that they were made strong by the armour, and power, and store of spoils, which they had gotten of the armies, whom they had destroyed: Also that they had pulled down the abomination, which he had set up upon the altar in Jerusalem, and that they had compassed about the sanctuary with high walls, as before, and his city Bethsura. Now when the king heard these words, he was astonished and sore moved: whereupon he laid him down upon his bed, and fell sick for grief, because it had not befallen him as he looked for. And there he continued many days: for his grief was ever more and more, and he made account that he should die. Wherefore he called for all his friends, and said unto them, The sleep is gone from mine eyes, and my heart faileth for very care. And I thought with myself, Into what tribulation am I come, and how great a flood of misery is it, wherein now I am! for I was bountiful and beloved in my power. But now I remember the evils that I did at Jerusalem, and that I took all the vessels of gold and silver that were therein, and sent to destroy the inhabitants of Judea without a cause. I perceive therefore that for this cause these troubles are come upon me, and, behold, I perish through great grief in a strange land. Then called he for Philip, one of his friends, who he made ruler over all his realm, And gave him the crown, and his robe, and his signet, to the end he should bring up his son Antiochus, and nourish him up forth kingdom. So king Antiochus died there in the hundred forty and ninth year.” First Macc 6:1-15

The Britannica Encyclopedia says of his death, “ at the end of 164, died of an illness at Tabae (or Gabae, probably present Isfahan) in Persis.” BRITANNICA 2003

NONE SHALL HELP HIM

“ . . . and none shall help him.”

None would be able to avert his death – not doctor, not magician, not a priest of the idols he had set up! He was, in every sense of the word, “helpless.”

Joseph Sutcliffe, writing in 1834, said this of the death of Antiochus: “After his defeat at Elymais, his allies forsook him. He then marched to rob the temple of Diana; and on his return, having heard that the worship of the Lord at Jerusalem was restored, he fell sick of a dreadful malady and perished, forsaken and hated of all men.”

Writing in 1896, J.E.H. Thompson said, “The death of Antiochus, baffled in his attempt to rifle the temple of Nanaia, humiliated not only by his own disaster, but by the news received from Jerusalem, is full of disappointment and misery, even when we get rid of the rhetoric with which the events are clothed in Polybius and 1 and 2 Maccabees. One-half of his army under Lysias had been baffled and defeated by Judas Maccabaeus; he himself had been repulsed in his attempt to replenish his coffers; there is therefore for him no helper, so he dies of disappointment at Tabes.”

Around 539 B.C., 375 years before Antiochus Epiphanes died, an angel from heaven put it this way: “yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.” It was written in “the Scripture of Truth.” Thus God removed Antiochus Epiphanes from the stage on which the drama of redemption is being worked.

CONCLUSION

This was a period of preparation – preparation for the coming of the Messiah. Judaism had lapsed into an unacceptable state, and thus the judgment of God came upon it. There is a sense in which the weakening of Judaism was the Lord preparing for the coming of the Messiah. God was purging from their manners conduct that would not be a suitable environment for the induction of the Savior of the world. Although there was no small amount of corruption among the people and their leaders when “the Word was made flesh,” it was not as bad as it would have been, had their iniquity not been beaten out of them with the chastening hand of God.

A NEW KIND OF ENEMY

It will be of value to here recount what has been revealed about Antiochus Epiphanes to this point – and it is considerable! We will see their unveiling of a new kind of enemy.

- 8:9a – He was the “little horn” that sprang out of the four Grecian horns that took the place of Alexander, the “notable horn” of the he goat.
- 8:9b – He “waxed exceeding great” toward the South, the East, and the “pleasant land” of Israel.
- 8:10 – He cast down “some” of the host of heaven, and the “stars,” and stamped upon them.
- 8:11a – He magnified himself as equal to the “the Prince of host.”
- 8:11b – By him the “daily sacrifice” was taken away.
- 8:11c – On account of Israel’s transgression, he was given to “cast truth to the ground.”
- 8:11d – He practiced and prospered without any apparent restraint.
- 8:23 – He is described as “a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences.”
- 8:24a – Through a power that was not his own, he destroyed fearfully, prospered and thrived.
- 8:24b – He would “destroy the mighty and holy people.”
- 8:25a – He would cause “craft to prosper in his hand.”
- 8:25b – He would “magnify himself in his heart.”
- 8:25c – By peace he would “destroy many.”
- 8:25d – He would “stand up against the Prince of princes.”
- 8:25c – He would be “destroyed without hand.”
- 11:21a –Described as a “vile person.”
- 11:21b – He will “obtain the kingdom by flatteries.”
- 11:23a – He will “work deceitfully.”
- 11:23b – He will become “strong with a small (or few) people.”
- 11:24a – He will do things “which his fathers have not done.”

- 11:24b – He will devise schemes “against strongholds” for a time.
- 11:25 – He will stir up “his power and his courage” against the king of the South (Egypt).
- 11:27 – He will join the king of the South in speaking lies.
- 11:30a – He will have “indignation against the holy covenant.”
- 11:30b – He will form an alliance with Jews who “forsake the holy covenant.”
- 11:31a – He will “pollute the sanctuary of strength.”
- 11:31b – He will “place the abomination that makes desolate.”
- 11:36a – He will “do according to his will.”
- 11:36b – He will exalt himself.
- 11:36c – He will “magnify himself above every god.”
- 11:36d – He will “speak marvelous things against the God of gods.”
- 11:36e – He will “prosper” until God’s indignation with His people is past.
- 11:37a – He will not regard the gods or religion of his fathers.
- 11:37b – He will “magnify himself above all.”
- 11:38 – He will “honor the God of forces” with gold, silver, precious stones, and pleasant things.”
- 11:39a – He will “acknowledge” a strange god.
- 11:39b – He will cause those who acknowledge him to rule over others, and will reward them.
- 11:40 – He will enter other countries and “overflow them.”

- 11:41 – He will “enter the glorious land.”

Deception Replaces Raw Force

In Antiochus Epiphanes we have a new kind of foe introduced. He is more like Satan than many of his predecessors – more filled with the nature of the evil one. While he was, indeed, unspeakably ruthless, his success was found in his deception, lies, covenants, and strategies. He was an intelligent enemy, who did not confine himself to mere barbarism.

For the first time, we find a person attempting to change the culture of the people of God. Nebuchadnezzar allowed them to maintain their way of life in Babylon. Belshazzar did the same, as well as Darius and Cyrus. They were allowed to keep their God and their Scriptures. Antiochus made a god of himself, and took unto himself the attributes of Deity. Other kings destroyed and plundered the Temple, but Antiochus Epiphanes polluted it with abomination. He was a different kind of enemy.

A Type of Coming Delusion

This is the point at which he foreshadows Paul’s “man of sin” and “son of perdition” (2 Thess 2:3), John’s “Antichrist” (1 John 2:18), and the second “beast” of Revelation (Rev 13:11). The “falling away” (2 Thess 2:3), departure from the faith (1 Tim 4:1), love waxing cold (Matt 24:12), and “perilous times” (2 Tim 3:1) of Scripture are not the abandonment of religion. They speak of the corruption of religion – a “form of godliness that denies the power thereof” (2 Tim 3:5). This is the shell of religion that has no real content, a form that possesses no power.

Powerless Religion Is Common

Powerless religion is so common in American churches that people have come to think nothing of it. Once the Lord warned Israel of seeking help from other sources than Himself. “Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but who do not look to the Holy One of Israel, Nor seek the LORD !” NKJV (Isa 31:1).

The modern church has sought to psychologists to resolve the issues of the mind and emotions. Too often, illnesses are not brought before the Lord. There are professed “experts” in nearly every facet of life, and they are getting a lot of business from the church. There are new ways of thinking, new ways of preaching, new ways of singing, and new ways of worshiping. They are creative, and they are powerful – at least that is what men are telling us. But all of these new ways has not changed hearts. It has not resolved the dilemma of immorality in the church, and populated the churches with insightful proclaimers of the truth. It has not taken away the appetite for sin, or brought the love of the truth into the professed church.

Just as Antiochus sought to hellenize the Jews, so Satan’s messengers have eagerly sought to

carnalize the church. One might even say, he has sought to HELL-enize the church.

This is the type of assault that was largely introduced by Antiochus Epiphanes. It was violent, but it was deceptive and shrewd. It was an attempt to alter the way God's people lived, spoke, and thought. This, in my understanding, is precisely the strategy that is being attempted through a corrupt church – a beast with horns like a lamb, but a mouth like a dragon (Rev 13:11). God be praised for the remnant who refuse to yield to such delusive subtleties! May they be strengthened and encouraged to stand.

The Prophecy of Daniel

MICHAEL STANDS UP FOR THE PEOPLE

Lesson # 38

INTRODUCTION

The twelfth chapter of Daniel is the epilogue of the book. That is, it is a concluding section that rounds out the design of this blessed volume. There are things in this section upon which the Christian community does not agree – matters upon which there is a sharp disagree among respected theologians. However, these circumstances must not keep us from subjecting our hearts and minds to the text, or from pondering it and meditating upon it.

It seems to me that it is not on the part of wisdom for any individual professing to know the Lord to purposely ignore something God has revealed and recorded in Scripture. As Scripture, it falls into the

category of things that are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17). We are not, then, dealing with theological novelties!

GETTING OUR BEARINGS

Because the book of Daniel has been subjected to extensive analyses by theologians disposed to promoting strange doctrines, it is essential that we get our bearings concerning its direction. I will show that it chiefly regards the Jewish people prior to the coming of the Lord Jesus, with additional references to His reign at the right hand of God, and other matters related to His government of the kingdom of God.

Daniel’s Prayer

In this book, we find a man of God purposefully praying for the Lord to be mindful of His city, His Temple, and His people. His prayer is focused, and totally lacking of any ambiguity.

- “O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain” (9:16).
- “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name” (9:19).

This is a pivotal prayer that provokes an extensive answer from heaven. It involves angelic activity, and a personally commissioned explanation from the mighty angel Gabriel. This confirms that Daniel’s prayer was in full accord with the determinations that had been made in heaven.

REFERENCES TO THE JEWS, THE TEMPLE, AND THE LAND

In the revelations given to Daniel, there have also been numerous references to the land of the Jews, the Temple of God and its service, the covenant, and the people of God.

- “. . . the pleasant land” (8:9).
- “. . . the daily sacrifice” (:8:11,13; 11:31).
- “. . . His sanctuary” (8:11,13,14).
- “. . . the holy people” (8:24).

- “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city” (9:24).
- “Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days” (10:14).
- “. . . robbers of thy people” (11:14).
- “. . . the glorious land” (11:16,41).
- “. . . the holy covenant” (11:28).
- “. . . sanctuary of strength” (11:31).
- “. . . such as do wickedly against the covenant” (11:32).
- “. . . the people that do know their God” (11:32).
- “. . . they that understand among the people” (11:33).

Add to these references the following elaborations concerning the Jews, their land, and the Temple.

- The book itself begins with the Babylonian captivity of the children of Judah (1:12).
- The focus is upon Daniel, a Jewish prophet, who is mentioned by name numerous times (1:6-11; 17,19,21; 2:13-20,24, 25-27; 46-49; 4:8,19; 5:12-13,17,29; 6:2-5,10-11,13-14,16,17,20-24,26-28; 7:1-2,15,28; 8:1,15,27; 9:2,22; 10:1,2, 7,11,12; 12:4,5,9).
- The revelations given to Daniel followed his time of prayer and fasting, which was prompted by his understanding that the captivity was about to conclude (9:2).
- The focus of Daniel’s prayer was the Jews, the Temple, and the land of Israel (9:4-19).
- The revelations vouchsafed to Daniel were in answer to that prayer (9:21–22).
- Daniel is specifically told these revelations regarded what would befall his people 10:14).
- The political activities that are highlighted regard the kings of the North and the South, between which the “glorious land” was situated (11:5-9,11,13-15,25,29,40,44).

- There would be aggressions against the land of the Jews (8:9; 10:3; 11:16, 38,41,45).

THE CONTEXT OF THE MESSIAH

All of this is set within the context of the coming Messiah, to whom the Kingdom would be given.

- In the days of these kings (Babylon, Medes and Persians, Grecia, and Rome), God would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed (2:45).
- The “Son of man” comes near “the Ancient of days” (God the Father), and is given “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (7:13-14).
- Times were specified that would terminate with the coming of the Messiah (9:25).
- The Messiah’s life would be “cut off” vicariously, or “not for Himself” (9:26).

WE MUST BEGIN WITH PROPER PERSPECTIVES

The understanding of Scripture requires that we begin with proper outlooks. The following perspectives are found in all Scriptural texts. They represent a frame of spiritual and intellectual reference that must be maintained.

- The Person of God the Father,
- The purpose of God.
- The Son of God, the Lord Jesus.
- The salvation of God as implemented by the Lord Jesus.
- The end of all things and the day of judgment.

Any view of Scripture that relegates these considerations to the background cannot be right. If, for example, a spiritual despot becomes the focus of our attention, we are immediately pointed in the wrong direction. At what time the earth and its affairs are vaulted to the place of prominence, we on an intellectual road that will lead us to erroneous conclusions.

While eschatology – the study of last things – is of itself intriguing, it is not a suitable point of emphasis. Unless God, His purpose, His Son, and His great salvation are clearly seen and emphasized in such considerations, they will contaminate the understanding. When Jesus came, He declared the Father, expounding Him and His eternal purpose (Matt 11:27; John 1:18; 8:28). When the Holy Spirit came, He declared Jesus, testifying of Him (John 15:26). When the Apostles spoke and wrote, they delineated God and His purpose, and Christ and His salvation (Acts 5:42; Eph 1:9-11; 3:3-5; 1 John 1:5).

Every Apostolic doctrine, whether dealing with morality, interpersonal relationships, or events like death and the judgment, are set within the context of God, His purpose, Christ, and salvation. If we choose to develop some other preconceived context, stuffing the Word of God into it, we will lose our way, being enamored of things and events rather than the Lord Himself and the hope of His calling.

It is necessary to say these things because of what many have taught concerning the passage before us. They have been pulled aside by considerations that actually diminish the God of heaven and His “great salvation.”

A SUMMATION

Daniel is being shown events that largely took place in the inter-testamental period – the time between Malachi and John the Baptist. As time progressed to the appointed entrance of the Messiah into the world, Satan picked up his initiative to thwart the purpose of God. During this period, this was largely done through political powers. Their initiatives were against the people through whom the Messiah would come. They would also be against their revealed religion, which served to provide a moral and spiritual context into which the Savior would come.

These oppositions were just, though grievous, for the people of God had departed from Him. He therefore threshed them like wheat to remove hindering manners and thoughts, thereby preparing the way for the Savior. Because they were carried out through the provocation of the devil, and in great hatred for the people of God and their ways, they were also wicked. Thus, in these activities, both the nature of God and the nature of Satan were made known. God is intolerant of sin and rebellion, and Satan is intolerant of any place or people that have been blessed by God.

In all of this we will find two things confirmed to our hearts. First, God’s purpose cannot be overthrown. Second, Satan’s will cannot be fully implemented. Satan will do his worst, but will not be able to thwart the entrance of the conquering Seed, who would bruise his head.

Now we will behold the Lord’s care for His people. He will not allow Satan to make an end of them, but will see to it they are preserved.

MICHAEL WILL STAND UP

“ 12:1a And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people . . . ”

The very sound of this passage emits tones of Divine mercy and profound consideration. God’s love can be seen. Intervention is made known. How wonderfully the New Covenant experience is portrayed: “cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor 4:9), and “chastened and not killed” (2 Cor 6:9). And again, “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1 Cor 11:32).

AT THAT TIME

“And at that time . . .” The time of reference is the one declared in the final verses of the previous chapter: “. . . therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain” (Dan 11:44-45).

This is the final initiative of Antiochus Epiphanes against the city and people of God. It is one in which he is determined to once and for all rid the earth of this people. During the initiative his life will come to an abrupt end: he will die of a disease, and none will be able to help him (11:45b).

This verse will tell us WHY the attack of Antiochus’ military forces was thwarted, and why he himself died. These were not occurrences of happenstance. One version accents this: “ BUT at that time . . .” DOUAY That is, even though the forces of Antiochus camped close to the holy mount, and were prepared to obliterate the people of God, there was an influence present upon which he did not reckon!

MICHAEL SHALL STAND UP

“ . . . shall Michael stand up . . . ” Other versions say of Michael, he “will arise,” NASB,NIV “will take up his place,” BBE and “will appear.” TNK

The idea is not simply that he will assume a standing position. Rather he will take his stand, stand forth, take his position, and maintain a cause . He will not allow things to proceed according to the plan of God’s enemies. He will assert himself, injecting himself into the affairs of men. He will stand up to do something – to see to it that the will of man is crushed and the will of God advanced. Thus the

scales will be tipped, giving the advantage to the people of God.

This is not Messiah. There are a considerable number of notable commentators who take the position that Michael is the Lord Jesus in His pre-incarnate form (Matthew Henry, John Gill, etc.). However, Scripture never represents the “Word” as being in angelic form. In fact, we are told He did not take upon Himself “the nature of angels” (Heb 2:16). As I have already dealt extensively with this subject in previous lessons, I will make no further comment on the matter here. It will detract from the exposition of the text.

THAT GREAT PRINCE

“ . . . the great prince . . . ” Other versions read, “the great angel,” BBE “the archangel.” NLT and “the great head.” YLT

All angels are not of equal rank, just as all saints are not equal in their roles. The government of God includes both high and low rankings. Michael is not only a “prince,” ruler, or captain, he is a leading and distinguished one.

Some imagine there is a sort of leveling of the masses in the Divine government – that everyone is of equal value and rank, whether among angels or men. But this is not the case. The heavenly realms, for example, whether of wicked or holy forces, have “principalities and powers ” – personalities of high ranking (Eph 3:10; 6:12; Col 2:15). In fact, in the creation itself these stations were established. They are not the result of the achievements of created personalities. As it is written, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him, and for him” (Col 1:16). If we regard the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, there are even ranks within it: “And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor 12:28).

But when it came to the care of the Jews, the Lord established Michael, “the great prince” to guard over and defend them. That action itself speaks of God’s special care for offspring of Abraham.

Antiochus Epiphanes was “great” among men. But he will not fare well when confronted with one who is great in heaven! Earth is always inferior to heaven. Flesh is always subordinate to spirit. The world is always of lower-ranking to the heavens. It is still true, “the heavens do rule” (Dan 4:26).

THE CHILDREN OF THY PEOPLE

“ . . . which standeth for the children of thy people . . . ” Other versions read, “who stands watch over the sons of your people,” NKJV “who stands guard over the sons of your people,” NASB “who protects your people,” NIV “the protector of your people,” NRSV “the supporter of the children of your people,” BBE “who has charge of your people,” ESV “defender of your people,” NJB “stands guard over

your nation.” NLT

Here is another facet of Divine government that could not possibly be known if it was not revealed. The ministry of Michael the prince would have remained hidden if God had not made it known. The well of human wisdom is not deep enough to even draw a conclusion like this. However astute men may prove to be in their capabilities of reason, they could never arrive at the conclusion that Michael had charge over the Israelites, or that he was commissioned to defend and protect them.

When, therefore, Michael stands up, he does so to protect and defend the people of God. That is his responsibility, and he rises to the occasion at precisely the right time.

This accounts for the miraculous survival of Israel throughout the years, from their exodus from Egypt until this very day. There is an appointed steward over them, charged with their care. It is Michael the prince.

Those Who Disdain the Jews

Those who have a disregard for the Jews have not duly considered this mighty angel. His appointment came from the God of heaven, for all of the holy angels do His bidding alone (Psa 103:20).

How will those who oppose this people fare if Michael stands up against them? Or, is there one who is foolish enough to imagine Michael has been put out of a job, or had his stewardship of Israel revoked? How would one hope to support such a postulate?

SOME OBSERVATIONS

Divine determinations are not carried out automatically. The decisions of the Almighty are not carried out by inexorable impersonal laws or forces. The hand of God is imminent in all of the affairs of this world. In the text before us we have an example of this principle. It is not that Antiochus Epiphanes was merely assigned a time during which he could do his own will. Nor, indeed, did that time simply run out, and he automatically failed. His demise is not only traceable to his time running out, but to the rising of Michael the appointed defender of Israel as well.

The Ultimate Example

The ultimate example of this is the coming of Jesus into the world. He did not simply appear by means of some impersonal law or edict. There were all manner of involvements between heaven and earth that brought it to pass. Ponder a few of them.

- The calling and involvement of Abraham.
- The exodus of Israel from Egypt.
- The wilderness wanderings.
- The warfare involved in obtaining the promised land.
- The involvement of the holy prophets.
- The involvement of David, from whom the heavenly king would come.
- The ministry of John the Baptist.
- The involvement of the birth of Jesus, and the revealed procedures to protect the child.
- Jesus increasing in wisdom and stature, and favor with God and man.
- The baptism of Jesus.
- The wilderness temptation of Jesus.
- The earthly ministry of Jesus.
- The Gethsemane testing of Jesus.
- The agonizing death of Jesus.
- The resurrection of Jesus and His post-resurrection ministry to His disciples.
- The ascension of Jesus.

In all of these things there was extensive heavenly involvement. The kingdom of God is not driven by some fatalistic principle or automatic pilot. That is confirmed in this text.

The implementation of the will of God is never accomplished independently of His own activity.

He Himself is always participative in His will, whether it is being wrought out in you, or toward you. Thus, after admonishing believers to “work out” their own salvation “with fear and trembling,” the Spirit adds, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13).

More Is Needed

Human wisdom and strength are not sufficient to sustain the people of God in trials. This is an exceedingly difficult lesson for many to learn. Although Israel was a chosen people, and had received extensive revelation from God, they could not resolve their own dilemmas. Both their wisdom and their strength were inadequate for the challenges they faced. Although the history books record how they stood valiantly against the armies of Antiochus, yet our text traces their success back to the involvement of Michael the prince.

It is the business of believers to develop a keen sense of heaven’s involvement in their affairs. All glory must go to the Lord for the triumphs, protection, and sustaining that are realized. As it is written, “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2 Cor 2:14).

There is such a thing as Divine intervention. There is a view of the kingdom of God that imagines Divine interventions no longer take place. Such things, it is conjectured, belong to the past. However plausible such a notion may seem, it was birthed by man, not revealed by God. At no time has the Lord ever suggested that He has withdrawn from this world, ceased to be the King of kings, or the Governor among the nations. If the government has been placed upon Christ’s shoulder (Isa 9:6-7), then He is governing among the affairs of men.

Interventions

Divine interventions are times when the Lord injects Himself into the affairs of men in a more apparent way. He can cause the counsels of the wicked to fail, and the strength of the righteous to increase. He can cause trials to both begin and cease, and to serve His purpose. Some measurable awareness of these things is essential if the child of God is to realize triumph and joy.

The people of God do not have to crawl to glory! They can run the race set before them with both strength and confidence, going through both fire and water. But it will be necessary for them to know “If God be for us, who can be against us” (Rom 8:31). It is possible to have such a grasp of this situation that we can “boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:6).

A Brief Summation

Briefly, our text is saying that when everything appears to be against the people of God, the tide will shift as Michael, the prince charged with defending Israel, stands up in their behalf. When he does,

the advantage will be given to the people of God, and the tide of power will transfer to them. Even though they have experienced unspeakable harm and setbacks, they will not be utterly destroyed. Their past may be marked by frequent defeats and seeming inferiority, but when Michael stands up, things will begin to change. He is superior to all of their foes, and his commission is superior to that of Antiochus Epiphanes.

When the angel says Michael will stand up, it means he is about to work. He does not stand up to observe, but to intervene on the behalf of God's people.

Marvel Not

Let no one marvel at the commission and activity of the mighty angel Michael in the behalf of the Israelites. In Christ Jesus, an even greater thing has occurred, involving all of the vast angelic multitude. "But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb 1:14). By faith, associate that with your own circumstance. There is much angelic activity being exercised in your behalf, and it is all effective.

A TIME OF TROUBLE

"1b . . . and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time . . ."

What follows is a description of the time during which Michael stands up. It explains the need for his intervention. It also confirms that the people of God are not the helpless victims of circumstance. This does not mean they will not suffer grievous things. It rather means they will not be overcome by them.

The saints must cast down the imagination that their lives can be trouble-free in this world. They must rather think in terms of surviving Satan's assaults, overcoming the world, and finishing the race set before them.

A TIME OF TROUBLE

. . . and there shall be a time of trouble . . ." Other versions read, "And there shall be a time of distress," NKJV "There shall be a time of anguish," NRSV "There shall be a time of tribulation,"

Septuagint and “a time unsurpassed in distress .” NIB

This troublous time is not what resulted from Michael standing up, but what necessitated his intervention.

This is not “trouble” in the ordinary sense of the word. It is rather unusual adversity, affliction, anguish, distress, and tribulation that comes from a focused and personal assault upon the people. This is not like a storm, or a flood, or hail stones falling from heaven. It is an intelligent attack, allowed by God because of transgression, fomented by the wicked one in an effort to stop the entrance of the Messiah, and carried out by wicked men.

I understand this time of trouble to apply immediately to the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. At that time, it was the purpose of that wicked man to exterminate the Jews. In principle, the text also applies to the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome (Matt 24:15-22), and a last-days persecution of the Jews toward the close of this age (Ezek 39:1-7).

Antiochus was the first purposeful and focused subverter of the Jew’s religion.

- Egypt did not attack the Jew’s religion. They made no concerted effort to make them worship Egyptian gods. The Jews maintained their faith in God during that 430 year bondage. The opposition they received was not because of their religion, but because of their number.
- The Babylonians did not seek to stamp out the Jew’s religion. There was no requirement for the children of Judah to become worshipers of Babylonian gods. Nebuchadnezzar plundered the Temple, but did not defile it with his gods. He even published a world-wide edict demanding respect for the God of the Jews (Dan 4:34-37).
- The Medes and Persians did not seek to eliminate the Jew’s religion. They neither plundered nor defiled the Temple. In fact, Cyrus the Persian was raised up to rebuild the Temple. They did not engage in an effort to force the worship of Median and Persian gods. Darius also published a global decree concerning the God of the Jews (Dan 6:25-27).
- Under Alexander the Great , there was no effort to exterminate the Jews or force them to change their religion. He did not plunder or defile the Temple.
- Even in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the aim was not to eliminate the Jews or force them to change their religion. From the Roman point of view, the intention was to make them political subordinates. They did, however, plunder and defile the Temple.

But with Antiochus Epiphanes it was different. Under the guise of the hellenization of the world, he also sought to eliminate the Jews because they did not yield to his demand to worship and serve other gods.

Because I have already included numerous historical references concerning the atrocities of Antiochus toward the Jews, the following quotations will suffice to confirm their uniqueness. Any standard encyclopedia will provide some extensive information on this.

“ . . . he indulged in the harshest manner of proceedings in Jerusalem, on occasion of the above shameful quarrel among the priests, *SEE MENELAUS* , which had been carried on by open force of arms (comp. Joseph. *Ant.* 12, 5, 1), and vented his rage especially on the temple, which he plundered and desecrated with great bloodshed (1 Maccabees 1:20-42; 2 Maccabees 5:1-23). Being checked by the Romans in his fourth campaign against Egypt, and compelled in a very peremptory manner to retire (Liv. 45:12; Polyb. 29:11; Appian, *Syr.* 66; Diod. Sic. *Exc. Vatic.* 31:2; Daniel 11:29 sq.), he detached (B.C. 167) a body of troops to Jerusalem, who took the city by assault, slaughtered a large part of the inhabitants, and gave up the city to a general sack (1 Maccabees 1:30 sq.; 2 Maccabees 5:24 sq.; comp. Daniel 11:31 sq.). The Jewish worship in the Temple was utterly broken up and abolished (1 Maccabees 1:43 sq.). At this time he availed himself of the assistance of the ancestral enemies of the Jews (1 Maccabees 4:61; 5:3 Daniel 11:41). The decrees then followed which have rendered his name infamous. The Greek religion was forcibly imposed upon the Jews, and there was set up, for the purpose of desecrating (Diod. Sic. *Eclog.* 3 4, 1) and defiling the Temple, on the 15th of Kisleu, the “abomination of desolation” [Daniel 11:31; 12:11; 1 Maccabees 1:57], i.e. probably a little idolatrous shrine (Joseph. *Ant.* 1 2, 5, 4) on the altar of burnt-offerings; the first victim was sacrificed to Jupiter Olympius, on the 25th of the same month. Many timidly submitted to the royal mandate (1 Maccabees 1:43), being already inclined to Gentilism (1 Maccabees 1:12), and sacrificed to the pagan gods (1 Maccabees 1:45); but a band of bold patriots united (comp. Daniel 11:34) under the Asmonnean Mattathias (q.v.), and, after his death, which occurred shortly afterward, under his heroic son, Judas Maccabeus (q.v.), and, after acting for a long time on the defensive, at length took the open field (1 Maccabees 4), and gained their freedom.” McClintok and Strong’s Cyclopedia

The historical book of Second Maccabees also records the following.

“Now when this that was done came to the king's ear, he [Antiochus Epiphanese] thought that Judea had revolted: whereupon removing out of Egypt in a furious mind, he took the city by force of arms, And commanded his men of war not to spare such as they met, and to slay such as went up upon the houses. Thus there was killing of young and old, making away of men, women, and children, slaying of virgins and infants. And there were destroyed within the space of three whole days fourscore thousand, whereof forty thousand were slain in the conflict; and no fewer sold than slain. Yet was he not content with this, but presumed to go into the most holy temple of all the world; Menelaus, that traitor to the laws, and to his own country, being his guide: And taking the holy vessels with polluted hands, and with profane hands pulling down the things that were dedicated by other kings to the augmentation and glory and honour of the place, he gave them away. And so haughty was Antiochus in mind, that he considered not that the Lord was angry for a while for the sins of them that dwelt in the city, and therefore his eye was not upon the place. For had they not been formerly wrapped in many sins, this man, as soon as he had come, had forthwith been scourged, and put back from his presumption, as Heliodorus was, whom Seleucus the king sent to view the treasury. Nevertheless God did not choose the people for the place's sake, but the place for the people's sake. And therefore the place itself, that was partaker with them of the adversity that happened to the nation, did afterward communicate in the benefits sent from the Lord: and as it was forsaken in the wrath of the Almighty, so again, the great Lord being reconciled, it was set up with all glory. So when Antiochus had carried out of the temple a thousand and eight hundred talents, he departed in all haste unto Antiochia, weening in his pride to make the land navigable, and the sea passable

by foot: such was the haughtiness of his mind. And he left governors to vex the nation: at Jerusalem, Philip, for his country a Phrygian, and for manners more barbarous than he that set him there; And at Garizim, Andronicus; and besides, Menelaus, who worse than all the rest bare an heavy hand over the citizens, having a malicious mind against his countrymen the Jews. He [Antiochus Epiphanes] also sent also that detestable ringleader Apollonius with an army of two and twenty thousand, commanding him to slay all those that were in their best age, and to sell the women and the younger sort: Who coming to Jerusalem, and pretending peace, did forbear till the holy day of the sabbath, when taking the Jews keeping holy day, he commanded his men to arm themselves. And so he slew all them that were gone to the celebrating of the sabbath, and running through the city with weapons slew great multitudes. But Judas Maccabeus with nine others, or thereabout, withdrew himself into the wilderness, and lived in the mountains after the manner of beasts, with his company, who fed on herbs continually, lest they should be artakers of the pollution.”² Macc 5:11-27

The Nature of the Trouble

Let me emphasize that it was the nature of this “trouble” that was unparalleled, not its intensity or external traits. By intelligent and shrewd strategy, there was an attempt to change the religion of the Jews. When that failed, there was an effort to exterminate them.

Trouble, But Not Extinction

All of this is described by the angel as “a time of trouble.” When Jeremiah prophesied of the Babylonian captivity, he used terminology that applies to the text before us. He spoke of the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in these words, “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it : it is even the time of Jacob's trouble ; but he shall be saved out of it.” (Jer 30:7). The language equally applies to the ravages of Antiochus, and the devastation wreaked by Rome in 70 A.D. Although these were all times of chastening, their severity was unparalleled. In them, all hope was dashed to the ground, and the people of God appeared to have been abandoned by the Lord. Yet that was not the case. In Jeremiah’s text he added, “but he [Jacob] shall be saved out of it.” Later Jeremiah continued, “yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished” (Jer 30:11).

In our text, Michael will stand up for the people, ensuring they are not utterly destroyed.

Concerning the Roman sacking of Jerusalem, Jesus said, “And they 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).

A Principle to be Seen

In these texts we have a shadow of the glorious truth brought to its fulness in the New Covenant. “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world ” (1 Cor 11:32). And again it is written of the excommunication of a fornicator from the church, “To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus .” (1 Cor 5:5).

3 I understand these texts can be abused and distorted. However, they ought not be eliminated from our vocabulary. They introduce an aspect of the Divine nature that offers hope to those of tender heart. Notwithstanding the tendency of men to corrupt such marvelous announcements, they must be preserved and proclaimed in the church, which is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15).

SINCE THERE WAS A NATION

“ . . . such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time . . . ” Other versions read, “such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered,” NIV “such tribulation as has not been from the time that there was a nation on the earth until that time,” Septuagint and “There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then.” NJB

A Nation

The language used by the angel is very precise. The “trouble,” distress, or tribulation will not be the greatest ever realized among men, but the greatest since there were “nations.” The judgments wrought in the flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, were of even greater magnitude, with total destruction being realized. In both of these judgments, men were not involved in carrying them out. They were Divine interventions without the involvement of men. Also, the judgment poured out upon Egypt in the ten plagues and the overthrow of Pharaoh’s armies was no doubt of greater magnitude. While Moses and Aaron were involved in announcing them, and using “the rod of God” (Ex 4:20), yet there were not executed by men.

This “trouble,” carried out by men, was unparalleled among “nations.” In every standard version of Scripture, the words “nation” and “nations” are not used prior to Noah. The first use of “nations” is found in the tenth chapter of Genesis. There, the origin of nations is traced through the sons of Noah. As it is written, “These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations : and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood” (verse 32): Ham (verse 20), Shem (verse 31), and Japheth (verse 5). The first use of the word “nation” is found in the twelfth chapter of Genesis, where God made promise to Abraham. “And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing” (Gen 12:2).

Generally speaking, a “nation” is a body politic. That is, it is a body of people organized in a certain manner, with laws and some form of government, and occupying a specific region.

What occurred to the Israelites through Antiochus Euphianes was unlike that experienced by any other nation. First, there was a concerted effort to change the religion of the people. Second, a forceful initiative was instigated to exterminate them.

To the Same Time

There is another limiting factor in this statement. This is not declared to be the worst “trouble” of all time. A window of time is specified: from the beginning of nations until that present time. Therefore, this is not a declaration of the worst distress of all time.

Compared with the Words of Jesus

Compare these words with the words of the Lord Jesus when speaking of a period of “great tribulation” – a period with a dual fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the closing period of time. “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be ” (Mat 24:21). Jesus speaks of the “beginning of the world,” and the times afterward: “nor ever shall be.” Mark records Jesus’s words in this way: “For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, neither shall be ” (Mark 13:19).

Not the Ultimate Distress

Thus we see this “trouble” was not the worst of all trouble experienced in this world. Rather, it was the most monstrous assault from the beginning of nations until that time.

All of this may appear quite inconsequential. However, there is something to be seen here that is most sobering. As the amount of revelation increases, the magnitude of chastening is also increased. When people have been exposed to more truth, there is a greater penalty to be paid for rejecting or departing from it. This is seen in Israel.

- When Israel murmured in the wilderness, they were grievously chastened, and caused to wander in the “great and terrible wilderness” for forty years .
- After extensive involvement with God, when Israel refused to honor the land Sabbath’s, they were chastened by a seventy-year captivity in Babylon.
- When Israel rejected “the Lord’s Christ,” they were chastened through the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and have remained blind toward God and oppressed by men until this day .

An Application

It is always most serious to do things “against the truth” (2 Cor 13:8; James 3:14). However, when the heart has been exposed to an “abundance of peace and truth” (Jer 33:6), a “greater sin” (John 19:11) has occurred. Consequently, “greater damnation,” or judgment, will be realized (Matt 23:14). There are sins of such magnitude that it will be “more tolerable for the land of Sodom,” than for those who commit such sins (Matt 11:24).

We live in a generation that needs to hear such words , even though they may be “hard to be uttered” (Heb 5:11). The message of the church has been greatly corrupted with the philosophies and wisdom of men. As a result, there has been a searing of the conscience, and a loss of perception of matters critical to the maintenance of faith, and the successful finishing of the race set before us.

EPOCH'S OF ISRAEL'S TROUBLE

The magnitude of the “trouble” realized in the initiatives of Antiochus Epiphanes may be seen in the following comparisons.

- Egyptian bondage (did not invade the land, slaughter was not common, religion was not corrupted).
- Babylonian captivity (invaded the land, some slaughter, carried them away captive, religion not corrupted).
- Destruction of Jerusalem (invasion, slaughter, Temple defiled, religion not corrupted).
- The slaughter instigated by Hitler (land not invaded, religion not corrupted).

These are to be compared with the Inter-testamental oppression, during which Antiochus Epiphanes entered and assaulted “the glorious land.”

- Invasion of the land.
- Slaughter of the people.
- Attempt to change the religion of the people, and enforce the worship of Jupiter.
- Defilement of the Temple with the “abomination of desolation.”
- Attempt to blot out the Scriptures.

With these things in mind, allow me to state the text once again. “And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time.” NASB

These are the circumstances during which Michael would stand up in the behalf of Daniel’s people. His intervention would change the events, frustrating the enemies of the Jews.

THE PEOPLE DELIVERED

“ 1c . . . and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”

The impact of Michael standing up is wonderfully stated. When heaven moves into action, earth is immediately affected! This is a message of hope for the prophet Daniel, and for us as well. The Lord does not hide from Daniel the fact of coming retribution upon the people. It will be fierce, and were the people left to themselves, they would be wiped from the face of the earth. However, they are not left to themselves, nor has God forgotten His promise to Abraham, as confirmed in Isaac and Jacob. Hard circumstances bring an end to human ingenuity and resources, but they do not close the door of heaven. This is why believers “look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor 4:18). Those “temporal” things include trials and distresses as well as the things upon which the “lust of the flesh” and the “lust of the eyes” are fastened.

THY PEOPLE SHALL BE DELIVERED

“ . . . and at that time thy people shall be delivered . . . ” Other versions read, “and at that time your people . . . will be rescued,” NASB “and at that time your people will be kept safe,” BBE “And at that time shall thy people be saved,” DOUAY “At that time your people shall escape,” NAB and “When that time comes, your own people will be spared.” NJB

This is what will happen because Michael the prince stands up for the people, thereby being faithful in his stewardship. The intentions of Antiochus will not be realized. His initiative will not be brought to its intended completion. The nation through whom the Messiah will come will survive, escaping the aggression launched by Satan, and carried out by the armies of the “king of the North.” The promise of God to Abraham will remain intact, and without interruption. The purpose of the earthly king will be brought “to nought” (Psa 33:10). The “counsel” of the Lord, on the other hand, will “stand,” and He will do all His pleasure (Isa 46:10).

This will happen at the height of the oppression, when, according to appearance, everything seems hopeless. How marvelously this illustrates the truth of the affirmation, “For His anger endureth but a moment; in His favor is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa 30:5).

All of this is traced to the protection and defense of Michael the archangel, into whose charge Israel had been committed. Michael is, then, superior to every worldly power – and he is for Daniel’s people. Who, then, can be effectively against them?

According to Appearance

In the oppression instigated by Antiochus, the deliverance appeared to come through the hand of the Maccabees. Although a relatively small band of Jews, they waxed valiant and “turned to flight the armies of aliens” (Heb 11:34).

One historical account of the activities of the Maccabees reads as follows. “Hanukka: reconsecration of the sanctuary. In December 164 BCE, three years after Antiochus had defiled it, Judas recaptured Jerusalem, all except the Acra. Judas then had “blameless priests” cleanse the Holy Place and erect a new altar of unhewn stones. They then reconsecrated the sanctuary. The Hebrew word for this act, Sanukka (“Dedication”), is the name still used for the Jewish eight-day Festival of Lights that commemorates the event . . . Judas Maccabeus, the third son, became the leader of the resistance movement. In his first battle he seized the sword of Apollonius, governor of Samaria, the general leading the opposing army. But he was also a man offaith in the God of his fathers. He saw himself as a charismatic, divinely appointed leader, like Gideon of old. He would pause in his guerrilla tactics to assemble his men to “watch and pray” and to read the Torah (the divinely revealed Law of Moses) together. Judas saw his task as that of the successor of Moses and Joshua. “Remember how our fathers were saved at the Red Sea,” he told his men, “when Pharaoh with his forces pursued them” (I Maccabees 4:9). Then they would blow their trumpets, as in the days of Joshua, and engage the enemy with renewed vigour . . . When Antiochus Epiphanes died in 164 BCE, others administered the kingdom because his son, Antiochus Eupator, was still a minor. Lysias, the Syrian general, was now the real power. A peace of a sort was agreed between Judas and the Syrian general, who was having trouble elsewhere, and the Jews secured liberty of conscience and worship.” BRITANNICA 2003

Another historical account reads, “Assisted by the Hasideans and an army of 6,000, Judas won several victories over Syrian armies and, in 164 ©, occupied the Temple in Jerusalem, building a new altar and fortifying the area. This remarkable event continues to be celebrated as the Festival of Chanukah or Rededication (sometimes also called the Festival of Lights) . . . The Maccabees, whose determination saved Judaism from extinction, ruled Judea for a century. Their story is told in the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees.” GROLLIERS ENCYCLOPEDIA 2003

That is the earthly perspective of things, and universally regarded as a most phenomenal accomplishment. However, Daniel is given the background information – what really brought about the survival of Judaism. “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered.”

Do Not Despair!

It is as though Daniel is being told, “Do not despair at the news of coming oppression! Your people will be preserved in spite of seemingly superior foes.”

The people of God should be able to take such texts and derive much comfort and encouragement from them. These are the type of texts of which it is written, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Rom 15:4).

WRITTEN IN THE BOOK

“ . . . every one that shall be found written in the book.” Other versions read, “everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued,” NASB “everyone whose name is found written in the book-- will be delivered,” NIV “every one who is recorded in the book,” BBE and “everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.” ESV

This is a book that is often mentioned in Scripture. It is language that denotes those who are standing in Divine favor, and for whom He is working all things together for good. The eyes of the Lord are upon those written in this book, and His ears are open to their cries. Ponder its mentioning in Scripture.

- Moses spoke of it. “Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of **THY BOOK** which Thou hast written . And the **LORD** said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of My book ” (Exo 32:32-33).
- David wrote of it. “Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in **THY BOOK ?**” (Psa 56:8).
- Prayer against persecutors. “Let them be blotted out of **THE BOOK OF THE LIVING** , and not be written with the righteous” (Psa 69:28).
- The living of Jerusalem. “And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is **WRITTEN AMONG THE LIVING IN JERUSALEM** ” (Isa 4:3).
- The writing of the house of Israel. “And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in **THE WRITING OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL** , neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord **GOD**” (Ezek 13:9).
- Jesus speaks of the book. “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are **WRITTEN IN HEAVEN**” (Luke 10:20).
- Paul speaks of the book. “And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in **THE BOOK OF LIFE** ” (Phil 4:3).
- The book of the Revelation speaks of this book. “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of **THE BOOK OF LIFE** , but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels . . . And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in **THE BOOK OF LIFE** of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world . . . And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is **THE BOOK OF LIFE** : and the dead were judged

out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works . . . And whosoever was not found written in THE BOOK OF LIFE was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev 3:5,8; 20:12,15).

Whatever a person may think of these expressions of the Holy Spirit, we must conclude that special attention is given to those who are so known in heaven. In our text, deliverance from the ravages of a despot depended upon whether or not the individuals were recorded in this book. There is no need to cloud people’s understanding by saying there is no such thing as a real book in heaven. That is religious chatter that yields no benefit, but only induces confusion and neutralizes the text. There is some sense in which there is such a book, and in which specific names are recorded. That is the point of the text, and it is to be joyfully received.

Daniel is told there would be no exceptions in the deliverance. “EVERY ONE” found written in “THE book,” would be delivered, rescued, and saved from the intentions of the wicked one.

Earthly Experiences Determined

The book, therefore, not only determines one’s eternal destiny (Rev 20:15), but what occurs on earth as well. There are temporal deliverances that also depend upon whether or not one’s name is written in this book! It is no wonder Paul shouted, “godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim 4:8). How blessed to ponder these realities!

When, therefore, Jesus promises, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life” (Rev 3:5), needed intervention in the affairs of this life is also intended.

According to this word of the Lord Jesus, overcoming the world has a direct bearing upon our names remaining in this book . That may contradict the theology of men, but it does not violate the truth of God, and thus has the power to edify. Let it be clear in your understanding, surviving the assaults of the wicked one is undeniable evidence that your name is written in God’s book, and has not been blotted out.

There is a sense in which temporal deliverances and Divine protection are directly proportionate to how God regards the individual. If it is countered that He really loves everyone, and that in Christ we are accepted regardless of our choices, preferences, and manner of life, then the following must be seriously considered. Such a contention is not valid.

- “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” (Eph 4:1).

- “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10).
- “That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory” (1 Th 2:12).
- “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight ” (1 John 3:22).
- “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you ” (2 Cor 6:17).

AN AWAKENING

“ 2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

We now come to language of a most lofty order. It is language that is both typical and substantive, spiritual and bodily. It can be used to portray an awakening of the unseen part of man, and one in the outer man as well. There is an immediate meaning that bears directly upon what will “befall” Daniel’s people in this world. There is also a meaning that transports our minds to the end of time. Our purpose is to capture both senses, having the final events, which are substance, clarified by those that are temporal, which are types.

Here is what the angel is doing. He takes us to the conclusion of time, and lifts up the substance to cast light upon the events of this world, thereby creating the shadow. There is a reason why he does this. What is going to occur upon earth cannot be satisfactorily explained by language alone, for it depicts Divine working which has no precise parallel upon the earth. Likewise, there are no adequate parallels in history, or human experience in general. Thus, in order to describe what will occur, the angel employs the language of the resurrection of the dead in order that we might understand what is going to happen in worldly history.

SLEEPING IN THE DUST

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake . . . ”

This is the language of resurrection. Referring to the raising of the dead, Jesus employed the very same language, except he said “all” would be raised. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

A Divine Manner

This is not the first time Daniel has been shown things at the close of time within the context of temporal judgments.

- When Daniel was first told about the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, he was also told of the day of judgment. “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened” (Dan 7:9-10).
- When Daniel was being told of the rise and fall of worldly empires, his thoughts were wafted into the eternal realms, where He saw the glorified Christ receiving the kingdom. “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan 7:14).
- After being told that Antiochus Epiphanes (the “little horn” who came up prior to the rise of the fourth kingdom, which was Rome) would make war with the saints and prevail against them, the attention of Daniel propelled to the end of time, when the kingdom will be given to the saints. “Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (Dan 7:22).

It is the peculiar prerogative of truth to speak concerning things eternal and things temporal in the same breath. The Spirit can move us forward to the end of time, gather some relevant reality, and come back to dwell upon things occurring in time.

Modifying Factors

The language itself is borrowed from the final resurrection of the dead. However, the events themselves do not do not deal with that time. First, the people are limited to Daniel’s people, the Jews. Second, it is only “many” that will awake, and not everyone. Whatever one thinks about those expressions, they should constrain us to move with caution in attempting to decipher this text.

Differing Views

- Some conclude this is a reference to those who rose from the dead when Jesus died. However, this cannot be so, for it is stated they were “many bodies of the saints ” (Matt 27:52), and thus none of them could be included in those who rose “to shame and everlasting contempt.”
- Others feel it to be a description of the spiritual awakening of the Jews, when God will “turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Rom 11:26). Again, this does not fit well with the reference to some awakening to “shame and everlasting contempt.”

What Is Being Said

It seems to me that what is being said here is this. During this time of great trouble, decisions will be made among the people that will have eternal ramifications. A single circumstance will serve to make known both the righteous and the wicked, just as will take place in the resurrection of the dead.

At the resurrection, the righteous and the wicked will be revealed simultaneously. Jesus affirmed an hour was coming when “all that are in the graves would come forth,” some to life, and some to condemnation (John 5:28-29). Paul affirmed “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). He declared that the wicked would “be punished with everlasting destruction” when Jesus comes to be “glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe” (2 Thess 1:10). One event will reveal both the godly and the ungodly.

Thus the time of “trouble” that has been revealed to Daniel will be an occasion when some will side with the Lord, while others side with Antiochus – which division did take place in history. At that time, the Maccabees came from the rocks in which they had been hidden, and fought with unparalleled zeal – like an awakening from the dead.

However, those decisions will ripple forward to the final resurrection when all things will be disclosed. The following language, as I understand it, is intended to reflect that fact, thereby bringing comfort to those who believe. Those who sided with the Lord, yet suffered, will be duly requited in the last day. Those who refused to side with the Lord will also realize the fruit of their doing. Men will reap what they sow, and let none be deceived about that (Gal 6:7-9).

AWAKING TO EVERLASTING LIFE

“ . . . some to everlasting life . . . ” This, as I have said, is the language of resurrection – but it is linked to things occurring on the earth.

In all of the Old Testament writings, this is the only place “everlasting life” is mentioned. There are allusions to everlasting life in Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms – but they are very few.

- “Length of days for ever and ever” (Psa 21:4).
- “I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever” (Psa 23:6).
- “Preserve thy going out . . . even for evermore” (Psa 121:8).
- “Life for evermore” (Psa 133:3).
- “He will swallow up death in victory” (Isa 25:8).

There are a few other such references (Psa 37:18,27; 49:9,15; 102:28), each of which is quite vague when compared with the greater illumination that has come with the Gospel. It is said of this greater illumination, “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel ” (2 Tim 1:9-10).

An Unusual Revelation

All of this confirms that a most unusual revelation was given to Daniel. It is apparent that it was intended more for us than for him. Notwithstanding, the great heart of God revealed, in those spiritually primitive times, things in the distant future, thereby casting some light upon the disconcerting experiences through which Daniel’s people would pass.

Here We Do Not Have The Whole

In Christ Jesus, we do “have” eternal life in this world – while we are yet in the body (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47,54; 1 John 5:11,13). However, we do not have the whole of it, for we are admonished, “Lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim 6:12,19). Keeping ourselves in the love of God, we are to look “for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ UNTO eternal life” (Jude 1:21). Eternal life is also affirmed to be “the end,” or result NIV of “holiness” (Rom 6:22). It is the “firstfruits of the Spirit” that is possessed by faith, and not the full harvest (Rom 8:23).

How marvelous, therefore, that this nugget of truth was vouchsafed to Daniel. It reveals what is involved in being “greatly beloved” of God (Dan 9:23; 10:11,19).

AWAKING TO SHAME AND EVERLASTING CONTEMPT

“ . . . and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Other versions read, “disgrace and

everlasting contempt,” NASB “eternal shame,” BBE “Everlasting horror and disgrace,” NAB “shame and everlasting disgrace,” NJB and “everlasting abhorrence.” TNK

Jesus referred to this as “the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29). The everlasting aspect of it is illuminated by these somber words from the Savior. “And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43-44). Paul spoke of it as being “Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess 1:9). It is something from which recovery is not possible.

While this did not occur when Israel was being oppressed by Antiochus Epiphanes, a type of did take place. One awful event was the occasion of the awakening of contemptible hearts as well as noble ones. What is more, the consequences of those revelations echoed into eternity, and will be fully revealed at the resurrection of the dead. That is, the consequences of decisions men made upon the earth will be faced when the dead are raised from the “dust of the earth.”

Because truth knows no boundary to the pure in heart, the angel can reach forward, taking hold of the day of the Lord and the resurrection of the dead. He can also take hold of the nearer events that would take place during the inter-testamental period, when there was no known prophet. Then, with the dexterity of one who has trafficked near the throne of God, he can put the two events together, enabling us to see the gravity of the things that would befall Daniel’s people. In so doing, this text becomes a sweet elixir of comfort to the righteous, and a solemn warning to those who allow trouble to bring wickedness out of them.

Having said all of that, and keenly aware of the fact that my words have been attended by certain generalities, I confess that I am persuaded the power of this text is found in its generality . That condition provides a context in which the Spirit can work profitably with each individual.

THE FACT OF THE RESURRECTION

This is one of the very few pre -New Covenant texts that speaks with clarity concerning the resurrection of the dead. It is, as I have already mentioned, almost identical with a statement made by the Lord Jesus. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29).

This is a single resurrection , as confirmed in Acts 24:15: “And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). While there is a resurrection called “the first resurrection,” it is not bodily one (Rev 20:5-6). It is a different kind of resurrection, like “the second death” is a different kind of death (Rev 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8). The Word of God never speaks of a “second resurrection” or a “first death” – never. The “first resurrection” is a spiritual one that precedes the resurrection of the dead, and is therefore called “first.” The “second death” is a spiritual one that follows the death to which all men are appointed, and is therefore called “second.”

The “resurrection of the dead” (Matt 22:31; Acts 17:32; 24:21; 1 Cor 15:21,42; Phil 3:11) is a single event involving both the righteous and the unrighteous, the children of God and the children of the wicked one.

The word “resurrection” is never used in the plural in Scripture, i.e., “resurrections.” This single resurrection will be accomplished by the voice of the Son of God, who will summon all of the dead from the graves. No one will be excluded. Some will come forth to forever be with the Lord. Others will be raised to be forever damned.

Why Mention It?

Why is such an event mentioned to Daniel? It is because it sheds light on the things Daniel is receiving. It serves to clarify the matters being set before him. There are two uses of the truth in Scripture. One deals with the exposition of the matter, such as Paul’s expounding of the resurrection in the fifteenth chapter of Revelation. Another provides a context in which other matters can be more clearly comprehended. It is only when time is set within the context of eternity that events occurring in time can be comprehended.

This is what is occurring in our text. The association of the awakening of many who sleep in the dust of the earth is with “the books” that are mentioned in verse one. It is as though the angel was saying, “The books that contain the names of those who are delivered in this world, will be fully revealed in the coming resurrection. Then, what is vaguely seen in this world will be clearly seen.”

Troubles Made Smaller

Additionally, as Daniel is brought to consider the resurrection of the dead and the consequences of it, the most horrendous experiences of this world are decidedly reduced in magnitude. It is only as we are granted to think within the context of the eternal that we can respond acceptably to the present.

The present religious trend of majoring on experiences in this world is a most dangerous one. By its very nature, it tends to make “everlasting consolation and good hope” of little consequence (2 Thess 2:16). Experiences in the flesh are thus unduly magnified, while spiritual life is minimized.

Further, under such circumstances, spiritual life itself begins to appear irrelevant. A perception is thus lost of what is involved in fellowship with Christ (1 Cor 1:9), living by faith (Heb 10:38), walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16), and working together with God (1 Cor 3:9). This is a most serious condition.

AS APPLIED TO THE TEXT

The relevance of this to our text is simply this: in a time of great criticality, decisions would be made that rippled into eternity itself. Some of the Jews chose to side with Antiochus Epiphanes. However, the Maccabees came out of remote places to stand against the wickedness this man sought to impose upon the people of God.

This was the time when 6,000 brave Jews stood against the Grecian armies and prevailed, taking the Temple back and cleansing it for holy use once again. Earlier, when expounding the words, “the people shall be delivered,” I provided a quotation that referred to this remarkable achievement.

The Rising and Falling of Many

Both great blessings and great judgments occasion the rise and fall of many. The ultimate blessing was the Lord Jesus Christ, sent to be “the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14). When Simeon dedicated the infant Jesus, he said these words: “Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against” (Luke 2:34).

So it will be at the resurrection of the dead. At that time, those who have lived by faith will rise to the pinnacle of Divine acceptance, and apparently so. They will be displayed as princes and judges. Others will fall into the pit at that time, from which they will never recover. Think on these things.

THE WISE WILL SHINE

“3a And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament . . .” Other versions read, “And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven,” NASB “and those who are wise will be shining like the light of the outstretched sky.” BBE

This is a continuation of thoughts regarding the resurrection. Once again, the coming circumstances are to be considered against the backdrop of eternity – more particularly, I mean the revelations that will occur when time comes to an end, and death is swallowed up in victory. That is the ultimate time of revelation.

THE WISE

“And they that be wise . . .” Other versions read, “those who have insight,” NASB “They that are learned,” DOUAY “the knowledgeable,” TNK “those teaching.” YLT

These are people “wise” in the eyes of the Lord, and perceptive of His ways and Word. They are prudent, and can “handle” the Word of God (2 Tim 2:15). They are also able to show others the things pertaining to life and godliness. They have understanding, and they can communicate, or teach, it. From the New Covenant point of view, this is being “wise unto salvation” (2 Tim 3:15).

This is wisdom to say and do, even as those who made the high priestly garments of Aaron, and various articles related to the tabernacle. “And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted , whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office” (Ex 28:3). And again, “And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee” (Ex 31:6).

This is not mere intellectualism, nor is it wisdom after the manner of this world, which wisdom is “foolishness with God” (1 Cor 3:19). There are people who are wise in their own eyes, but God does not recognize their wisdom. In fact, He pronounces a “woe” upon them. “Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isa 5:21).

There are people who have an extraordinary amount of factual knowledge. They are experts in language, who can decipher words, and ferret out the various verb tenses and lexical meanings. Others are experts in history, certain kinds of documentation, and the likes. But these are not the “they that be wise” of our text.

A Greater Wisdom

There is a higher plateau of wisdom – one where the ways of God are known, as well as God Himself. There are people to whom God has made known “His ways,” as He did unto Moses (Psa 103:7). These, like the wise men of Esther’s day, are individuals who “know the times” (Esth 1:13). They are like certain of “the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do” (1 Chron 12:32).

In the times being shown to Daniel, those who were “wise” were experts in the Law, who were able to give its “sense,” as certain priests in the day of Nehemiah (Neh 8:8). They could more readily distinguish good from evil, and knew what things ought to be restored and preserved. They knew when unlawful encroachments were being made by the wicked, and when they should rise up and stand for the right.

In our times, “they that are wise” are experts in the Word of God, and particularly in the Gospel of Christ. These are described as “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil ” (Heb 5:14). They can “rightly divide the Word of God,” or handle it properly (2 Tim 2:15).

These can plough in the field of truth with profit. They can clarify the things of God, and decipher the times. Such can break open mysterious texts of Scripture, and comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of Divine love. They know the ways of God as well as His Word. His purpose is not strange to them, and they are walking in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7).

Such people are not always seen as precious, or even necessary, in this world. There are even churches where such people are viewed as peculiar. Their wisdom is considered valuable only in the hour of crisis, or when some special advantage of benefit is being sought. But what does God think of such people – “they that are wise?” The next statement tells the story.

THEY SHALL SHINE

“ . . . shall shine as the brightness of the firmament . . . ”

The “wise hearted” may be obscure in this world, but they will not be in the world to come. While in this world, there are special times when they rise to the surface as an undeniable testimony – as with Moses, Joseph, Solomon, John the Baptist, and the Apostles. Even then, their brightness soon diminishes in the eyes of their peers. However, there is a glorious future for those who are wise! Because they are extraordinary, and partakers of excellent Divine benefits, they will “shine as the brightness of the firmament.”

That is, they will become prominent like the diverse and powerful lights of the heavens do in the night. Their wisdom will no longer be hidden from those about them, or unappreciated by those to whom it is exposed. Because they have obtained wisdom from God, and because that wisdom partakes of the nature of God, it will eventually burst forth like the glowing skies, with its myriad of galaxies.

Regarding the things that would “befall” the Jews, they would be terrible to the extreme. Those who were wise would not, for a while, appear to be so. Yet, they would come forth as surely as the heavens are lit up when it is dark. While those times would prove to be the undoing of many, they would also provide a confirmation of Solomon’s words. “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day . The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble” (Prov 4:18-19).

What is true of “ they that be wise” after time is no more, is inevitably introduced while they remain in this world. Even here, surrounded by wicked men and harassed by the devil, they “shine as lights in the world,” being “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation” (Phil 2:15).

THOSE WHO TURN MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

“3b and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” Other versions read, “who lead many to righteousness,” NASB.NIV and “those who have instructed many in uprightness.” NJB

“Righteousness” is the area in which these spiritual luminaries had wisdom. Such not only turned people from something, but to something as well. It is essential to “turn from idols.” It is also necessary to turn “to serve the living and true God.” In the days when Antiochus Epiphanes sought to exterminate the Jews and their religion, it was not only important to refuse to worship Jupiter, but to engage in worshiping and serving the true God (Matt 4:10).

Thus the angel does not speak of turning many from unrighteousness, but of leading them into righteousness. The Maccabees not only moved people to refuse to worship Jupiter, but also to publically and heartily worship the Lord.

There really is no purpose for letting go of ungodliness if men do not take hold of godliness! If, for example, a person ceases to be a drunkard, it is of no value unless he is being “filled with the Spirit” (Eph 5:18). It is possible for people to no longer be known as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. But that is of no value whatsoever unless they are “washed,” “sanctified,” and “justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:9-11). There simply is no such thing as being “dead to sin” without being “alive” and sensitive to “unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 6:11).

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS IN OUR TIME

Right here we strike at a particularly weak aspect of contemporary Christianity. Too often religious men entertain the notion that being converted, or saved, only involves a cessation of godless living. However, it also involves the commencement of living “soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12).

Invariably, where there is an emphasis on, what institutionalism calls “soul-winning,” there is a weakness in being “turned to righteousness.” When Solomon said, “he that winneth souls is wise” (Prov 11:30), he was speaking more of what men were won to than what they were won from. This by no means diminishes men being turned from sin, for righteousness cannot be imputed or embraced unless men turn their backs on sin. If men continue to sin, it is because they have not laid hold on eternal life (1 Tim 6:12). If the world overcomes them, it is because they have not been living by faith (1 John 5:4-5). If they fall into sin, it is because they have not set their affection on things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God (Col 3:1-2). If they have carnal minds, it is because they have not been living by every word of God (Lk 4:4).

It Is Time!

It is time for those who wear the name of the Lord to more noted for being “of God” than they once were for not being of God. Godly appetites and preferences must surface, as well as an abhorrence of that which is evil.

Thus the truly wise are noted for what they turn men to – “they that turn many to righteousness.” To be turned “to righteousness” is to begin to do righteousness, for “he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7).

THE DESTINY OF THOSE WHO TURN MANY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

And what shall happen to those who “turn many to righteousness.” How does heaven regard such people? What is their destiny – their inevitable destiny? They will “shine like the stars for ever and ever!” They will no longer be obscure or unappreciated! Jesus referred to this when He said, “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mat 13:43).

Jesus was speaking of the time after the harvest, when the tares are “gathered and burned with fire” at the “end of the world” (Matt 13:40). That is when the glorified Christ will “send forth His angels , and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity,” casting them “into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Mat 13:41-42). Then, and only then, will the truly wise, who have turned many to righteousness “shine forth in the kingdom of their Father.”

So far as heaven was concerned, they were shining while they remained in the world , even though they were often considered the “offscouring of all things” (1 Cor 4:13). After the harvest, all of the things that were against them and obscured them will be forever gone! They will not shine by contrast , as they did in this world, but will shine in and with the brightness of Divine glory. It is one thing to stand out among a wicked generation. It is quite another to stand out in the presence of the Lord Himself. But that will be the state of those who are wise and turn many to righteousness!

CHURCH BUSINESS

It is the business of the church to make much of the future – when the righteous will shine forth. That is where the preachers and teachers are to shine the spotlight, which will also illuminate the temporal order. Knowing what we shall be will shed light upon what we are not to be now. It will also provide strength and incentive walk “worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory” (1 Thess 2:12).

If the glorious future of the saved is hidden from the people, they will at once begin to be overcome by this world. My blessed and godly mother, now present with the Lord, taught me when I was young, “If what is above you does not control you, what is around you will.” That is a true saying.

It saddens my heart to behold so many professing Christians who have so little understanding of “the things God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor 2:9). Much of the moral and spiritual weakness and ignorance of the professing church is directly traceable to this condition. It is as though power is withheld from those whose attention is not set on the goal.

If Daniel and those following him could derive strength from the proclamation of a somewhat veiled future, what kind of strength will be ministered to those who have embraced the greater clarity of the Gospel proclamation? More has been revealed, and thus more comfort and power can be realized.

Having An Old Covenant View!

Care must be taken not to maintain an Old Covenant view of the future. It was becoming for the time during which it was ministered, but it is inappropriate for this time, when the government is upon the shoulder of the Lord Jesus (Isa 9:6-7). Our view of life and death must be greater than that of Job, and Solomon, who lived in times of lesser revelation. They lived during the time of lesser light. Our views of dwelling in the house of the Lord must be greater than that of David, who saw but the rough outline of glory. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ “hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim 1:10).

SHUT UP THE WORDS

“ 4a But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end . . . ”

Now we will see why many things in this book – particularly this passage – lack the clarity men prefer. It is intended only for those who have a heart for it, and even then, there are many mysterious things about it. Yet, it is the truth itself that satisfies the soul, even when it is not thoroughly comprehended. The rough outline of a deliverer is precious, even if every detail of Him is not seen. The sound of imminent help causes the heart to leap forward with anticipation, even when the particulars of deliverance are not known. That, and more, is involved in the words of this verse.

SHUT UP THE WORDS

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words . . .” Other versions read, “conceal these words,” NASB “close up and seal these words,” NIV “keep these words secret,” NRSV “close the words,” DARBY “Keep the prophecy a secret,” NLT and “hide the things.” YLT

A similar word was spoken in the eighth chapter, where Daniel was also told of Antiochus Epiphanes: “wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days” (Dan 8:26). In that text, as well as the one before us, Daniel was not given a message that was to be proclaimed far and near, or without discrimination. It was not intended to remain secret, as the angel will confirm. Yet, for the time, it was premature to expound it, or probe further into its meaning.

There can also be a secondary meaning of shutting it up like a precious treasure – protecting it and patiently waiting for it to be further unfolded.

Another Point

Another point can be seen here. The angel is saying that was all he had to say to Daniel about the matter. He should record what he had seen and heard, and leave it there. He should not add his own words to the revelation, write down his impressions, or record any “private interpretation” he may have had about the revelation. The revelation must be protected precisely as it was given, with no embellishments. This, of course, is a Divine manner revealed through both Moses and John the beloved.

Moses. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deut 4:2). That was equivalent to saying, “shut up the words.”

John. “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Rev 22:18-19). That also equates to saying, “shut up the words.”

Some Mystery Remains

While the angel’s words have cleared up some things, they have introduced other mysteries – at least for the moment. Daniel must be content with this circumstance, for “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever” (Deut 29:29).

Faith demands that we leave matters where God has left them, refusing to indulge in fleshly speculations.

If there are things about the book of Daniel that are difficult for us to see, we must not put the book aside as though it had no value. Let us keep the book in our heart, even when it has been “shut.” There will come a time when it is appropriate to open more of it to us – either in this world, or the one to come.

SEAL THE BOOK

“ . . . and seal the book . . . ” These words equate to “keep it closed,” or “keep the book sealed.”
NJB

I gather this refers to keeping the book from the profane and disinterested people. The book was not kept from the godly, for Daniel wrote it down, and “all Scripture is profitable” (2 Tim 3:16-17). However, he was not to indulge in lengthy explanations of it to those lacking an interest in the people of God. As we will see in the following expression, this was not to be a permanent circumstance. There was a time when the book could be unsealed and opened.

An Application

There are some texts of Scripture that are especially unprofitable for the disinterested and even the novice. A hearty investigation of them must be preceded by a genuine interest in things pertaining to life and godliness. The books of Daniel and Revelation are in this category. Both of them deal with visions, where truth is paraded before us in animated form. When, however, tender and sensitive hearts are exposed to these books, they will surely be blessed. Your own experience will confirm this to be the case. Perhaps, for a while, you stood back from the books of Revelation and Daniel, perceiving them as confusing, and perhaps even fearful. However, when you began to grow up into Christ in all things, you found some rich morsels in the very volumes you once saw as beyond your grasp.

THE TIME OF THE END

“ . . . even to the time of the end . ” Another version reads, “even to the time appointed.” DOUAY The “time of the end” is the time during which the things that are written will begin to be fulfilled . At that time, they will be opened, and will become more apparent. When the things the angel has made known begin to happen, then the truth of them will be more clearly seen.

The things that have been spoken by the angel are not intended to be used to formulate an official religious position. They are not mere intellectual dainties, or theological fads to be traded back and forth among religious specialists. They were to be recorded precisely as they were given. Then, when they came to pass, they would be unfolded to the elect, yielding edification and comfort.

In this way, the Word of God is seen as “seed” (Luke 8:11). When it finds lodging in an “honest

and good heart,” the time has come for it to be unfolded. All times before that were “even to the time of the end.”

The Manner of the Kingdom

This is a kingdom manner, or a way in which God deals with humanity. When what God has declared occurs in human experience, then light is shed upon it, and the book is unsealed. At that time, those who are involved in the experience receive the understanding they did not have before.

Peter on Pentecost

A most excellent example of this facet of the kingdom is seen on the day of Pentecost. At that time God began to fulfill many things that were formerly like Daniel’s prophecy – shut up and sealed. The words of these prophecies were known, but their meaning remained veiled.

When the Holy Spirit was “shed forth” by the Lord Jesus, and prophesied events began to take place, Peter at once saw more in certain texts than he had ever seen before. He saw the truth of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32). He saw the truth of David’s words (Acts 2:25-28; Psa 16:8-11). He saw the truth of God’s promise to David concerning One who would sit on his throne (Acts 2:30-30-33; 2 Sam 7:11-16; 1 Chron 17:11-15). He saw the truth of David’s Psalmic prophesy (Acts 2:34-36; Psa 110:1-3).

The time of those prophecies had come, and thus they were opened to the hearts of the faithful.

Until the Day Dawn

This principle is also seen in Peter’s word concerning the “more sure word of prophecy” that those in Christ possess. A “more sure word” is one that has already been fulfilled, as compared with one that is yet to be fulfilled. Of this “More sure word” Peter writes, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet 1:19).

This “more sure word” relates to the accomplishments of the Lord Jesus as contained in the Gospel. He has already put away sin (Heb 9:25), reconciled the world to God (2 Cor 5:18-20), destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14), plundered principalities and powers (Col 2:15), and is “the end of the law for righteousness” (Rom 10:4). He has already made peace with God through the “blood of His cross” (Col 1:20), and is ever living “to make intercession for us” (Heb 7:25).

These things being true, this is the time when they can be understood – when the book can be unsealed, so to speak. Therefore, as we diligently give heed to them, making them a priority in our

thoughts and meditations, they will be opened to us. What a marvelous truth!

A Common Experience

When you experience what God has said, it opens to your understanding. In this sense, you know no more of God's Word than you have actually experienced. A person whose heart has actually been circumcised is able to arrive at an understanding of "the circumcision of Christ" (Col 2:11). For all others, the matter is "shut up" and "sealed." The best they can do is philosophize about it, and philosophy has no moral or spiritual power. When the Lord has "opened" your heart, the Scripture that declares He opened Lydia's heart comes alive to you (Acts 16:14). Until that time, such expressions are "shut up" and "sealed."

The Vaunting of the Intellect

Since the corrupting influence of the "Age of Reason," the human intellect has been unduly vaunted. The emphasis has thus been turned from experiencing the truth, or "knowing the truth" (John 8:32), to the wisdom of men. Thus we hear such prattle as, "Men can only have a grasp of the word of God when they know the Greek and the Hebrew." Or, "The secret to understanding the Scripture is found in understanding the context." Or, "An understanding of history and the culture of Bible times brings a better understanding of the Word of God." Or, "We must have a proper hermeneutic to really understand the Scriptures." Another one men have sought to dignify is, "The Bible was inspired only in the original language."

Such affirmations may have a sound of wisdom, but they are utter foolishness, and there is not a mote of truth in them. God is not required in any of them, nor is the Lord Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. Illumination and enlightenment (Eph 1:18; Heb 6:4; 10:22) have no place in any of them. They are all of man, through man, and to man. Nowhere, nor at any time, has God ever suggested such an approach to His Word.

Although I have been branded as unreasonable in this area, I will contend that God's Word can only be profitably opened when the heart of man is ready to receive it. There may very well be an intellectual grasp of the Bible, and that I do not deny. However, such a grasp cannot purge the conscience, increase faith, or stabilize hope.

Part of the reason for the "perilous times" in which we live is directly traceable to the conditions I have just described. Men, together with their positions, and human understanding have been given the glory that is due to God alone. The result has been the shutting of the book! A cursory acquaintance with the average church will confirm this.

RUNNING TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE INCREASED

“ 4b . . . many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” Other versions read, “Many will go here and there to increase knowledge,” NIV “Many shall be running back and forth, and evil shall increase,” NRSV “numbers will be going out of the way and troubles will be increased,” BBE “many shall fall away and evil shall increase,” NAB and “Many will roam about, this way and that, and wickedness will continue to increase.” NJB

Here again, the various translations cause confusion to awaken. Some suggest there will be much activity, and an increase of knowledge will result. Others propose that the activity is an effort to acquire knowledge. Others indicate that in spite of a lot of intellectual activity, wickedness will continue to advance as though totally unrestrained. What does the angel intend to convey to our hearts with these words?

First, what is here said is a continuation of the angel’s word concerning the words being sealed until the time of the end, or the time of their fulfillment. The “knowledge” of reference, therefore, cannot be general human knowledge – like an explosion of scientific and technical expertise. While that may very well occur, it is not at the heart of the text.

The “knowledge” of reference applies to the understanding of things declared by God – things that are opened, or unsealed to the listener.

RUNNING TO AND FRO

. . . many shall run to and fro . . . ”

Although some versions leave us thinking this refers to vain pursuits, I do not see the text allowing for such a conclusion. The words translated “to and fro ” do not suggest wandering or aimlessness, but rather searching something out. They are used in reference to God Himself: “. . . the eyes of the Lord which run to and fro throughout the whole earth” (Zech 4:10). It is also said of the Lord, “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him” (2 Chron 6:9). This was the manner in which the raven Noah released sought for a dry place (Gen 8:7). Satan’s quest to find someone whom he may devour is also described in the words “to and fro” (Job 1:7, 2:2). The idea, therefore, is one of deliberate searching, with an aim to find something.

I take those who are running to and fro to be those who are wise. The activity is intended to “turn many to righteousness.” That is, not only will the obscure prophecies become more readily apparent when they are being fulfilled. God will also raise up an army of insightful proclaimers who will be “wise,” and will “turn many to righteousness.”

Initially, this would happen in the insurrection of the Maccabees against the armies of Antiochus. Their true strength would not be in their military strength or strategy, but in their perception of the Word of God.

Seen in the Spread of the Gospel

This principle finds its apex in the proclamation of the Gospel. Once the promised Messiah had put away sin and been exalted to the right hand of God, insightful laborers were raised up who ran to and fro throughout the world. They were “wise,” and turned many to righteousness.

Thus the word was fulfilled, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom 10:14-15).

KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED

“ . . . and knowledge shall be increased.”

This refers to the time when the book will be unsealed, and obscure prophecies made more plain. I do not know that God ever refers to the spread of iniquity as the increase of knowledge. The knowledge of this text is recognized heaven. Other knowledge is not knowledge at all, but mere foolishness (1 Cor 3:19). The increase of knowledge is owing to the activity of the “wise,” not the aimless wanderings of the ignorant.

The New Covenant Perspective

The New Covenant perspective is one of the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth. As it is written, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:9). And again, “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14).

Such wonderful knowledge will not be scholastic in nature, but spiritual. Knowledge that does not come from the well of salvation brings no eternal advantages!

This knowledge will flow from the unsealing and opening of “the book,” and deal with a more thorough understanding of the Lord and His purpose. This is in perfect keeping with the Divine manner that has been revealed throughout Scripture.

CONCLUSION

We have dealt with a passage of Scripture that has been subjected to all manner of human manipulation. Most of the abuses of this passage tend to promote sensationalism, and even fear. They also have a remarkable appeal to those who are living and walking in the flesh. Such a circumstance at once reveals the nature of these doctrines. God simply is not in the business of promoting intellectual novelties and impressing minds that are alienated from Him. Wherever we find such activities, they can summarily be dismissed as spurious, and even injurious.

You must come away from a text like this with an acute awareness of the nature of spiritual understanding. It involves the opening of Scripture at the time its truth is experienced. Until that time, the profitable meaning of Scripture is beyond the reach of mortals. Impure hearts may stretch to get the meaning, and employ all manner study techniques to arrive at an understanding of the Bible. But they are all in vain. The book is simply “sealed” to outsiders who have their home and preferences in “this present evil world” (Gal 1:4).

From one point of view, this was a most difficult text, for it contained things that were hard to connect to history. However, from another point of view, it was unusually edifying, for it confirmed things familiar to everyone who walks in the Spirit and lives by faith. It also assisted us in understanding our Lord, together with His marvelous ways. It is always profitable when the Lord Himself can be seen in the text.

The Prophecy of Daniel

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE and DIVINE CONCEALMENT

Lesson # 39

INTRODUCTION

There is a certain spirit that pervades this book, and it is encapsulated in the prophet Daniel himself. It is the spirit of holy inquiry – a quest to know the truth. Wherever such a spirit is found, there will be a response from heaven! Truth is never lavished upon the disinterested, and the Lord does not long remain where He is not wanted.

Also, when understanding was given to Daniel, he was thankful, and sought the more to understand what was shown to him. Ponder the many times this spirit surfaces in the holy prophet.

- Together with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, he sought for God to make known to him the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, together with its meaning (2:17-19).
- Daniel knew God gave wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those with understanding. Therefore, he sought to obtain wisdom and understanding (2:21-23).
- He received understanding of Nebuchadnezzar's second dream of the tree that was hewn down (4:19-27).
- He received understanding of the message written by the hand on Belshazzar's palace wall (5:24-28).
- He "considered" the vision of the beasts, focusing upon the horns of the fourth beast (7:7-8).
- He looked intently into the vision of the four beasts until he beheld "the Ancient of days" (7:9-10).
- He came near to one of the angels he had witnessed and asked the truth concerning the visions he had seen (7:16).
- He wanted to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, its ten horns, and the "little horn" that sprang from them (7:19-20).
- He deeply considered the vision of the ram and the he goat, and was given to see more (8:5-12).
- He "sought for the meaning" of the vision of the ram and he goat (8:15).
- Through the books of Jeremiah he concluded the Babylonian captivity was about to come to an end (9:2).
- He sought for understanding through prayer and fasting (9:3-23).
- He sought for insight for three full weeks, setting his heart to understand (10:2-14).

The remarkable things that were revealed to Daniel were preceded by his longing to know and understand the things of God.

THE TRUTH OF GOD IS NOT LEARNED INADVERTENTLY OR CASUALLY

There is something to be learned from Daniel the prophet – something that is vital for our time. The truth of God is not learned inadvertently, or suddenly and without cause. Spiritual insights do not come to those who are caught up in the things of this world. Nor, indeed, are they granted to those whose affection is not set on things above (Col 3:1-2). A preoccupation with the things of this world closes the door of heaven, so that the things of God become hidden to the individual.

The truth of God is not learned casually. That is, where there is not a quest to know the things of God, they simply will not be known. Truth is not an intellectual novelty, and it cannot be discerned if it is so viewed. Only those who seek actually find (Matt 7:7-8). In our time, there is a new emphasis placed on religious expression – “praise and worship.” Of itself, this is commendable. However, this expression is being taught by rote, without a dominating quest to know the truth itself. Jesus said the truth will make us free if it is known, and only so. Yet, with all of the emphasis that is being placed on “praise and worship,” a staggering ignorance of the truth of God exists in the professed church. This ignorance betrays a lamentable condition. The “love of the truth” has not been received! As a result a certain casualness is gaining popularity that has disarmed the soul and obscured the truth of God.

Where there is a disinterest in the truth of God, there is an inevitable ignorance of it. During spiritually primitive times Solomon instructed his son, “Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Prov 23:23). Isaiah spoke of the same thing when the Spirit moved him to write, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa 55:1). Jeremiah echoed the same sentiments. “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer 29:13).

THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH

The appropriation of the truth is necessarily preceded by the love of the truth – a preference for it, and an insatiable thirst for it. The Spirit informs us that the “love of the truth” is “received,” and is necessary if we are to be saved. It is also essential to the appropriation of understanding – spiritual understanding, which is a facet of salvation (Col 1:9). If “ignorance” alienated us from God in the first place (Eph 4:18; Col 1:21), there is surely no allowance for it once we are “in Christ.”

Among the people of God there must be a certain intolerance for an ignorance of the truth. When the things that can be known by believers are not known, there is to be an earnest quest to appropriate such knowledge.

The Lord cursed the Gentile world for not appropriating knowledge that was available to them. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [back] the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them” (Rom 1:18-19). Because “they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind,” which cannot take hold of the truth (Rom 1:28).

God brought certain things within the grasp of Daniel, and the prophet reached out for them because he loved the truth. He had an appetite for the things of God, and therefore earnestly sought them. Now, in Christ Jesus, much more has been revealed. It has been brought within the reach of His people, and will be appropriated if they seek it.

A SERIOUS DEFICIENCY

If there is a single deficiency in the modern American church, it is the lack of a love for the truth . It is exhibited in a preference for religious entertainment, infrequent gatherings, and brief periods of preaching and teaching. The combined teaching activity of the average church rarely exceeds one or two hours a week. This could hardly be described as continuing “steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine” (Acts 32:42).

If Daniel had such a spirit, we would not have the book of Daniel. He would have died in a state of ignorance concerning the things of God, just as many are doing in our day. He would have spent more time in the courts of the various kings he served than in the courts of the Lord.

If men and women are ever to advance beyond spiritual infancy they must be delivered from addiction to superficiality and brevity. Neither of those dreadful traits are found in the glory, and they must not be found among those who wear the name of Jesus.

Daniel Was Superior During An Inferior Time

Daniel lived before “life and immortality” were “brought to light” through the Gospel (2 Tim 1:10). He lived before “the Sun of righteousness” arose with “healing in His wings” (Mal 4:2). His life was lived prior to “the fulness of the time,” when the Son entered the world to redeem those who were “under the Law,” giving them “the adoption of sons” (Gal 4:4). Yet, Daniel’s commitment to, and interest in, the things of God so far transcends that of the average churchman that a comparison between the two can scarcely be made.

This condition contradicts all that the Prophets said of the era of the Savior, the time of the New Covenant. It violates the very nature of the New Covenant itself, which describes all of its constituents as knowing the Lord, from the least the greatest. Both their hearts and minds have God’s law written upon them, so that there is accord with the truth, and unanimity with the “Lord God of truth” (Psa 31:5; Jer 31:31-34). Understanding and insightful speaking are hallmarks of the day of salvation (Isa 35:5-6). Those who are in Christ are described by the Prophets as drawing water with joy out of the wells of salvation (Isa 12:3). Their hearts have been circumcised to love the Lord with all the heart and soul (Deut 30:6).

Paul assessed those in Christ as being “the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil 3:3). Yet we are living in a time when

Daniel, who lived in an inferior time, possessed more of these qualities than many who are living in the blazing glory of the exalted Christ.

As we come to the conclusion of this book, it is imperative that these things be clearly seen. We must yield to the influence of Daniel, who was “greatly beloved” of God (Dan 9:23; 10:11,19). It is possible to be favorably provoked by this man of God to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col 1:10). Blessings are not sent indiscriminately upon the sons of men, and we do well do know it. Truth is for those who love and seek for it.

DANIEL IS ALERT, AND SEES TWO PERSONALITIES

“ 12:5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river.”

Daniel has already received an astounding amount of revelation – the only man in the history of the world to receive such detail concerning the inter-testamental period. He was a custodian of things that were written in “the Scriptures of truth,” the book of Divine destiny. The things he was shown were not simplistic, and often impacted upon both his mind and his body (4:19; 8:17-18; 10:7-9,16-17).

Keep in mind, this was not a young man, but an aged prophet, probably near ninety years of age. However, his mind and spirit were vigorous. Therefore, he will be given even more insights.

A Kingdom Principle

This is, of course, a principle of the Divine economy, and is embodied in our Lord’s words. “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance ” (Mat 13:12). Conversely, “whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath” (Mat 13:12). When an individual does not take seriously what is given by God, even what he was given will be taken away from him – just as in the text just quoted. This was Jesus’ explanation of why He spoke to the multitudes in parables. He did not do it to clarify the truth. The disciples, who inquired concerning those parables, were given “more” than the parables themselves. Their interest in the words of the Lord became the channel through which more was given to them.

The same truth is taught in the parable of the talents. The master distributed talents (a sum of money) to his servants according to their ability. One received five, another two, and another one. When

the master of the house returned for a time of accounting, the man with five had gained five more. The man with two had gained two more. The man with one talent had buried his money, and had only what was originally given to him. The first two men were called “good and faithful” servants, were made rulers over “many things,” and entered into the “joy” of their lord.

The last servant was severely upbraided. “Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strowed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.” The single talent was then taken from him, and the master ordered that it be given “unto him which hath ten talents.” The Savior then explained why this was done, “For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath” (Mat 25:29).

The Relevance of this Principle

This principle has particular relevance to the reception of the truth. Those who, through meditation and spiritual thought, realize a greater understanding of the truth will be given more. Those who neglect the truth, having no real appetite for it, will even lose what they were given.

Daniel stands among those noble souls who hid the Word in their hearts, meditating upon it day and night (Psa 1:2). This is the reason he was given to see more – he faithfully handled what he was given.

The prevailing ignorance of spiritual things that envelopes many a soul is the result of neglect and unfaithfulness. No person will be given more by the Lord, who treats with disdain what he has already received. However, for those who treat the truth of God as a precious jewel, buying it and refusing to sell it (Prov 23:23), more insights will be given. Such will find their “spiritual understanding” (Col 1:9) being enlarged.

I LOOKED, AND BEHOLD

“Then I Daniel looked, and, behold . . .” The angel has just told Daniel to “shut up the words,” for the revelation he was sent to deliver was now finished (12:4). However, Daniel does not gather up his belongings and return home. It was “then” that Daniel “looked.” He seemed to sense there was more to be realized. Because one facet of the truth has been revealed does not mean there are no other aspects to be disclosed. He lingers in the vestibule of revelation, looking about with interest, as though desiring to remain in this holy place. And, “behold,” there was something more to be seen!

A Case Against Brevity

Daniel has just experienced an extended revelation (10:5-12:4). Yet, more remained to be known. It is my contention that many people never linger long enough with the Lord to receive anything

significant. Their exposure to the Lord and His truth is too brief for things of any magnitude to be seen. Their appetites are too small, and in unbelief, they cater to them. Those in Christ Jesus are capable of receiving infinitely more than they imagine. And even when they seem to be reaching the end of their capacities they can pray, “I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart” (Psa 119:32). God can give wisdom and understanding “exceeding much,” together with “largeness of heart” (1 Kgs 4:29). I know of no place in Scripture that suggests there is any virtue or safety in minuscule spiritual appetites.

We live in a time when the things of God are being associated with both brevity and shallowness. Such things are even extolled, and represented as having superior value. But this is a gross misrepresentation of the facts in the case. If Daniel could not receive his revelation in such a culture, you may be sure we will not be able to do so. Until the truth of God is perceived as valuable, to be preferred, and worthy of extended exposure, not much of it will be made known.

OTHER TWO

“ . . . there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river.”

It is probable that Daniel is still by “the great river, which is Hiddekel” (Dan 10:4). This is now known as the Tigris river. As holy people are prone to do, the prophet is slow to leave the place where he has received so much.

The sacredness of this place is confirmed by the heavenly personalities that can be seen there. Now, on either side of the great river, Daniel sees “other two” – that is, two additional angels. We will find they were not there to draw attention to themselves, but rather to the truth of God – to Divine determinations. Angels are ever ministers, sent to serve the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:13-14).

ANGELIC INQUIRY

“ 6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.”

We will find that the two heavenly beings Daniel now sees have been present all along,

undetected until this time. He had, in fact, been conversing with a mighty angel with other angels listening.

Much, if not all, of what goes on among men is being observed by holy angels. Perhaps this is why Solomon wrote, “Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?” (Eccl 5:6). Also, when commenting on the necessity of honoring the order set in motion by God Himself, Paul wrote, “Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Cor 11:9-11). That is, among the assembly of the righteous, no one can operate in a completely independent manner. The angels know this, and so should we.

Such knowledge is not intended to provoke withdrawing fear. We will find in our text that there are certain advantages to the presence of angels. There is a certain sanctifying influence that comes when we consider the presence of holy angels. Make a practice of considering such things and see if this is not true.

I cannot leave this point without mentioning that the holy angels are also intrigued by the Gospel that has been “preached to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.” It is written of that glorious Gospel, “things which angels desire to look into” NKJV (1 Pet 1:12). I have often pondered their possible reaction to professing Christians who entertain little or no interest in that Gospel – God’s “power unto salvation.”

A THIRD ANGEL

“And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river . . .”

This is the angel who delivered the rather lengthy discourse just heard by Daniel. We are introduced to that angel by these words, “Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz” (Dan 10:5). Now we see that he was “upon the waters of the great river.”

There are a variety of renderings of this verse in the various translations. Some say the “man clothed in linen” was “upon” the waters. KJV Others that he was “above” the waters. NKJV, NASB, NIV, RSV Still others read “upstream,” NRSV, NAB “over,” BBE “stood upon,” DOUAY and “standing further up the stream.” NJB The meaning of the word used here is “higher part, upper, past, above, on top of, and upwards.” STRONG’s The meaning seems to be that the heavenly messenger was separate from the waters themselves, as being superior to them – even though they were a “great river.” This is the imagery of heavenly superiority and power over the elements of this world.

The great Tigris River must certainly have been impressive to men, both in sight and in its history. Today, the average width of this river is two hundred yards. It has been a prominent river from the Garden of Eden throughout Bible history. It is over 1,140 miles in length, whose waters, together with the Euphrates supply waters to Mesopotamia, referred to as the cradle of civilization. Yet, when “the man clothed in linen” is seen above its waters, there is no further thought of the “great river.” The attention of the angels, and Daniel as well, is immediately upon the heavenly messenger. That is what happens when a person is made aware of heavenly realities. The earth in its grandest form recedes into the background, and is no longer prominent. Many professed Christians have never experienced this perspective. However, if they will give heed to this text, it may very well whet their appetite for the things of God. The world loses its powerful attraction to the hearts of men when they become conscious of heavenly beings and realities.

HOW LONG?

“How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” Other versions read, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?” NKJV “How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?” NIV “How long shall it be to the end of these appalling things ?” NAB “How long will it be until these shocking events happen?” NLT

Genuine Interest

In keeping with what has been consistently revealed about angels, this text confirms they have an intense interest in God’s working among the sons of men. Thus, they have been listening to the words of this mighty angel, taking in what he has been saying. They want to know about the fulfillment of the “wonders” of which he has spoken – even though he was not speaking to them. These were extraordinary things – even to angels.

An Appropriate Question

The question is appropriate, for “times and seasons” are in the Father’s power (Acts 1:7), from whom this angel has been sent. The angel is asking what time has been assigned to the things revealed to Daniel. He does not ask when they will begin, but when they will conclude?

Holy angels and godly men are both interested in knowing when great blessings will begin, and when great judgments will conclude.

These holy personalities were not inquiring about the rise and fall of worldly empires. Such things were not wonders, or “shocking events.” NIV The activities of the Grecian Empire could not have been the object of their inquiry, for all worldly kingdoms are destined to fall beneath the overwhelming kingdom of God (2:44).

If holy angels are intrigued by matters that do not even pertain to them, how ought men to feel about Divine appointments and activities that DO pertain to them? Where there is a lack of interest in what God has made known, a certain brutishness exists that is unbecoming of any mortal.

While the angel spoke to Daniel, these two angels listened to what he was saying. Now, when a word is addressed to these personalities, Daniel listens to what is being said. This is a most excellent example of the fellowship that exists between the people of God and lofty beings in heaven. While that fellowship is not always marked with perfect clarity, yet there is a marvelous harmony that is created in the Lord. Something of the grandeur of this circumstance is revealed in the twelfth chapter of Hebrews . “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem , and to an innumerable company of angels , to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven , and to God the Judge of all , and to the spirits of just men made perfect , and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant , and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb 12:22-24).

Such marvelous unity was introduced in men like Daniel. It is realized more fully in Christ Jesus. It will be brought to its culmination in the fulness of times, when God will “gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Eph 1:10). One of the measures of a profitable assembly is the degree of harmony that is promoted between heaven and earth. Such harmony is a context in which God will work more freely, and to the greater benefit of those so assembled. However, where that harmony is lacking, very little, if anything at all, will be experienced that is of eternal benefit.

A TIME, TIMES, AND A HALF

“And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half . . . ”

An angel has been asked a question by another angel – and Daniel heard it, just as he did earlier (8:13). Now the prophet will hear the answer as well.

I Heard the Man

It is as though Daniel’s heart was tuned to the heavenly frequency. When this angel first appeared to him, he alone saw the vision, even though others were with him. Of that occasion he wrote, “And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them , so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength” (10:7-8). Apparently those men could not tune in to this lofty spiritual frequency. What drew Daniel into the vortex of revelation repelled them. They did not have “ears to hear.”

Not only is Daniel keenly aware of the presence of these three heavenly beings, his ears are tuned to what they are saying. He has “ears to hear,” which ears not only refer to a capacity, but to interest and inclination as well. Only those who do not have “ears to hear” fail to hear! If we are able to handle such things, this accounts for the high level of disinterest that exists within the professed church. I will wax bold and affirm this is evidence that such people have not been born again, for the Scriptures know nothing of people with new hearts and spirits who lack a fundamental interest in heavenly things. From time to time, the godly may have to be stirred up – but it is “pure minds” that are “stirred up” by holy remembrances (2 Pet 3:1).

He Lifted Up Both Hands

The revealing angel raises both of his hands – “his right hand and his left hand unto heaven.” This is a most unquing heavenly gesture. John the beloved saw an angel stand with one foot on the sea, and the other on the earth. He raised “his hand to heaven” (Rev 10:5). But here, the angel raises both hands to heaven.

Because of the gravity of the revelation given to Daniel, the angel raises both hands to heaven, as though confirming the word with a solemn oath. Ponder the enormity of the things revealed to Daniel.

- An enemy would have indignation against the holy covenant (11:30a).
- Many of the people would forsake the covenant (11:30b)
- The sanctuary will be polluted (11:31a).
- There would be an abomination that would make desolate (11:31b).
- Holy people will fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, for many days (11:33).
- Some of them with understanding shall fall, to purge and make them white (11:35).
- A wicked king will speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper in doing so “till the indignation be past” (11:36).
- The “glorious land” would be invaded (11:41).
- A time of trouble would come to Israel such as had never occurred from the time nations began until that time (12:1).

For those with a keen interest in the people of God, these were soul-jarring realities. Even holy angels were moved by hearing of them, and wanted to know how long they would last. Daniel is also

intensely interested in these matters, for he had a profound love for God, His service, and His people. Therefore, the mighty angel confirms the certainty of the things that have been declared, and that they will have an appointed conclusion.

An Observation

Since the introduction of the “Age of Reason,” also called “The Enlightenment” (the eighteenth century) there has been an unusual assault against the people of God. Reason and the human intellect have been vaunted above faith. All manner of Biblical textual criticism has been popularized and embalmed in paraphrased translations of the Bible. Joining together with the rise of religious institutionalism, pioneered by Catholicism, very grievous circumstances now exist within the Christian community. Man has actually been exalted above God, by means of varied interpretations and approaches to understanding the Scriptures.

The religious environment has been so polluted that few people are even aware of the departure from the faith that has taken place. A powerless and fundamentally ignorant church now fills the land, and few souls appear to be alarmed by the condition.

All of this is very much like the things that confronted Daniel and the holy angels overhearing the revelation given to him. Corruption was brought in, together with defilement and decline, and it was great concern to both the prophet and the angels. How long would such abuses be permitted to continue? How long would truth be “cast down to the ground” (8:12)? How long would oppressors ravage the people of God?

One cannot read the prophecies of a great falling away without sensing the gravity of such a situation (Matt 24:12; 2 Thess 2:3; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-5; 4:3-4; 2 Pet 2:1-3). Sensitive souls cannot hear such things without being moved – without making inquiry about them.

It is possible – yea, imperative – that souls surface within the professed church who are appalled by disinterest, chagrined by indifference, and startled by the dominance of human reasoning over Divine revelation.

Him that Liveth Forever

The mighty angel swears by Him who “lives forever.” NKJV These words are not an angelic assessment, but an appeal to revelation. Through Moses God revealed, “For I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever” (Deut 32:40). When John the beloved heard an angel swear while raising his hand to heaven, similar words were said. “And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the

earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever , who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer” (Rev 10:5-6). What is the significance of such words? Are they merely an affirmation of God’s eternity? Indeed not!

In all of these cases, God Himself is placed along side earthly circumstances. He is eternal, they are not. He is the one who governs, not men and circumstance. He Himself overshadows what occurs upon the earth, and is the proper object of our affection and inquiry.

If we have difficulty understanding the words now before us, we must be sure we do not have difficulty understanding the God who sent them. One of the characteristics of the New Covenant is this: “they shall all know Me ” (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11). There is no promise that they will “know,” or understand all circumstances. Sometimes, although what God will do is known in detail, yet the hearer must respond, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor?” (Rom 11:34). Something of that spirit will be found in this text.

Time, Times, and an Half

Some versions read “two times” in the place of “times” (NRSV, RSV, GENEVA, NJB). One version reads “a year, two years, a half-year” (NAB).

The Etymology of the Word

While there are some good reasons to suppose the word “times” means two times, that is not what the word itself means. At this point I am careful to say it is not right to hang doctrine or spiritual understanding on the frail nail of language. There is, however, a point to be made here.

The Hebrew word translated “times” (mow’ed) is quite common in Scripture, and is translated in a variety of ways. It is translated “seasons” in Genesis 1:14 and Psalm 104:19, “set feasts” in 1 Chronicles 23:31, 2 Chronicles 31:3, and Nehemiah 10:34 “solemn feasts” in 2 Chronicles 8:13 and Ezekiel 46:9, “solemnities” in Ezekiel 46:11, and “feasts” in Zechariah 8:19.

Add to this the consideration that God has been specific in speaking of multiple “times.” Nebuchadnezzar, for example, was judged by God for a period of “seven times” (4:16,23,25,32). In this case, however, a different word was used – ‘iddan, which denotes “year.” This is, incidently, the same word translated “times” in Daniel 7:25.

When it comes to speaking about appointed years, God can also speak with unquestionable clarity. The Israelites captivity in Egypt was 430 years (Ex 12:40). Their wilderness wanderings were 40 years (Deut 2:7). The Babylonian captivity was 70 years (Jer 29:10). The length of Israel's rule by Judges was 450 years (Acts 13:20).

In all of these uses, Divine appointment is the emphasis. As with the feasts, the duration itself was appointed by God. I draw attention to this circumstance to emphasize that special care must be taken not to miss what God is saying. As I have said, there are seemingly sound reasons for saying the word "times" stands for "two years." However, our theology must not be bent around that view. The edifying quotient will be found in the fact that God has appointed the times. The outworking of that appointment, from the view of duration, is incidental, although it is not to be avoided. In my judgment, these observations are necessary in view of the crystallized doctrines men have created regarding these things.

A Similar Period Mentioned Earlier

In the seventh chapter, Daniel was introduced to another "little horn" that would spring out of the ten horns on the fourth beast. It was said of that "little horn," "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Dan 7:25).

Some Considerations

- The above mentioned "little horn" was not Antiochus Epiphanes. Antiochus came out of the third kingdom (Greece). The "little horn" of Daniel seven came out of the fourth kingdom (Rome).
- In the seventh chapter the ruler of reference sprang from among ten horns on the fourth beast, that was diverse from all before it (7:7,20-24). Antiochus sprang from among four horns on the he goat (8:8,22).
- The "little horn" of Daniel seven had "a mouth speaking great things," and prevailed against the saints "until the Ancient of days came" (7:8,21-22). The "little horn" of Daniel 8-12 was noted for his exploits of the "pleasant land," or "glorious land" (8:9; 11:16,41). He was also noted for the desecration of the Temple (8:11,13,14; 11:31).

The "little horn" of Daniel seven, is not the "little horn" of chapters eight through eleven. The first depicted an aggression against the church, which was initiated from the fourth kingdom, Rome. That aggression is also declared in the book of the Revelation, where the "ten horns" are mentioned (12:3; 13:1; 17:3,7,12,16). The second was an initiative against the Jews, and was Satan's effort to thwart the coming of the Messiah.

Another Reference

Further, there is also a reference to “time, times, and half a time” in the Revelation (12:14). In this instance, the time specified a period of Satanic aggression during which the saints of God would be nourished. This differs from the thrust of our text, and blends more with the revelations given in the seventh chapter of Daniel.

Other Complicating Factors

There are other considerations that confirm the sobriety with which we must approach this text.

- The period of time, times, and half a time is also mentioned in the Revelation – 12:14. There it has to do with being “nourished from the face of the serpent.”
- If the period is three and one-half years, by using the standard thirty days for a month, the period is forty-two months. In the account of the flood, the 30-day view of a month was revealed. The flood began on the seventeenth day of the second month, and the ark rested on the seventeenth day of the seventh month – a period of five months. That period is identified as 150 days, making each month 30 days long. Using this calculation, 3 ½ years would be 42 months – a period mentioned in Revelation 11:2 and 13:5. There it has to do with the Gentiles treading down the holy city and corrupting the “court that is without the temple.” It also describes a period during which a “beast” was given a “mouth speaking great things and blasphemies,” who was “given to make war with the saints, and to overcome them.”
- Using the same formula of a thirty day month, 42 months translates into 1,260 days – a period mentioned in Revelation 11:3 and 12:6. During that time God’s two witnesses prophesied in sackcloth, and the people of God fled to a place prepared by God, where “they should feed her.”

What Does It All Mean?

In view of these considerations, what is the meaning of the phrase, “time, times, and a half?” As I have shown from the various texts, and references to this period from different perspectives, the answer is not a simplistic one. Neither, indeed, will it fit handily into a preconceived theology.

There are some commonalities in the references to time, times, and half (Dan 7:25; 12:7; Rev 12:14), and in 42 months (Rev 11:2; 13:5), and in 1,260 days (Rev 11:3; 12:6).

- Words were spoken against the Lord (Dan 7:8,25; 11:36; Rev 13:5).
- A place sanctified by God trodden down (Dan 8:11,13; Rev 11:2).
- The things of God known, but subdued (Dan 12:3; Rev 11:3).

- Divine protection (Dan 11:32; Rev 12:6, 14).

In every instance, the opposition seemed invincible, yet the cause of the Lord survived, and the people of God were not obliterated.

There is also something else to note in these references. They all had to do with visions, not doctrine. None of them were an exposition in the ordinary sense of the word, and a certain veil of obscurity is spread over all of them.

There is a sense in which this scenario has been repeated throughout history. Seemingly impossible circumstances were introduced, yet the cause of the Lord prevailed. This is seen in Able being slain by Cain, Noah surviving the wickedness of the world, and Israel enduring their Egyptian bondage. The continuance of the Israelites after their wilderness journeyings and their Babylonian captivity also attest to this truth. There was also the inter-testamental period which is being especially revealed to Daniel, and the bloody persecutions of the church of God.

The Holy Spirit has schooled us to associate this period of time (3 ½ times, 42 months, and 1,260 days) with Divine appointment, the survival of the righteous, and the frustration of the wicked! It may very well be that the language is intended to convey what will happen, not when it will happen. The duration itself may not be the real point, but the outcome of it all.

For the moment, I will affirm the language is designed to speak of these very things – (1) an intelligent and aggressive assault against the people of God, and (2) The sustaining and ultimate survival of the people of God. All of this is by Divine appointment, with nothing occurring outside of God's power and ultimate purpose.

Possibly Fulfilled in Antiochus, But Not Exhausted

This period roughly coincides with the time when Antiochus first entered Jerusalem until the temple was cleansed -- about three and a half years. A similar period occurred between the desecration of the Temple and the death of Antiochus. If you mark the period from the time Antiochus set up the abomination until the Jews (15 th day of Casleu, 145) until the Jews again offered sacrifice in the rededicated Temple (25 th day of Casleu, 145), you have three years and ten days. Some also feel this is the period of time during which public sacrifices and and worship were discontinued through the persecution of Antiochus. The temple was in fact defiled for about three years and seven months.

Although the precision sought by the intellect cannot be strictly accounted for, yet the general fulfillment of the text can be seen in the demise of Antiochus, and the cessation of his persecution.

However, this cannot be the thorough significance of the text, as the same language is used elsewhere of other oppressions. The Revelation, in which much of the same language is used, refers to the oppression of those in Christ, while the revelation given to Daniel by this angel had to do with what would befall his people, the Jews.

The Principle Seen Elsewhere

The same principles were seen in the devastation of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 – an appointed chastening of the Jews because of their rejection of the Lord's Christ.

As I have already mentioned, they also apply to the oppression that was initiated against the church by the Papal Rome corruption – also an appointed judgment owing to the lethargy that had crept into the church.

There may also be other similar oppressions toward the close of time.

The following verses will bring more clarity, although all mysteries will not be resolved.

SCATTERED POWER

“ . . . and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people . . . ” Other versions read, “when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered ” NKJV “When the power of the holy people has been finally broken ,” NIV “and all these things will come true , once the crushing of the holy people's power is over,” NJB and “When the shattering of the holy people . . . all these things will have happened .” NLT

The language here is very precise, and worthy of noting. The text does not say “the people will be scattered,” but that the power of the people will be scattered. Etymologically, the word translated “scatter” means “to dash in pieces, beat in sunder, broken, dashed in pieces.” STRONG'S

The Wearing Down of the People

To “scatter the power of the holy people” is to wear them out. All of their strength would be dissipated, and they would have no power of themselves to stand. This same language was used of the oppressor mentioned in the seventh chapter. “And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High , and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time” (7:25). As I have already indicated, that revelation was given by another angel (7:16), and concerned one that proceeded from the fourth great kingdom, represented by a beast with ten horns. The “wearing down” of chapter twelve is not historically the same as chapter seven. It does, however, involve the same principle.

The book of the Revelation also contains similar language. There, the church is being oppressed by “the beast.” “And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them : and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (Rev 13:7).

There were also earlier experiences that drained the Israelites of all of their power. It happened during the Egyptian bondage. It occurred again in the Babylonian captivity.

In all of these instances the balance of power appeared to be in the favor of the enemy. The natural power and strength of the people of God was completely drained. No amount of human ingenuity or military power could sustain them. There simply was no help outside of the Lord.

In the sense of religious oppression, this first occurred in Antiochus Epiphanes. The sacking of Jerusalem by Rome also brought Israel to absolute strengthlessness. The bloody persecutions of the Roman Empire did the same. The Roman heresy stripped the saints of power as well. Events related to the latter times will also result on the thorough dissipation of the strength of the saints.

A Brief Summation

The following events are characterized by the thorough draining of the strength of the people of God.

- The 430 year Egyptian bondage.
- The 70 year Babylonian captivity.
- The oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes.
- The destruction of Jerusalem by Rome.
- The persecution of the Roman empire.
- The oppression of Papal Rome.
- The “last days” oppression.

In each of these instances, with the single exception of the Egyptian bondage, the oppression was induced by the falling away of the people of God. In the case of the Egyptian bondage, the purpose was to prepare the people for their national beginning, and to create in them a certain discontent with Egypt.

The Principle

The prophetic language of our text applies to each of these events. The message that must come across to our spirits is this: the power of God is absolutely essential to the maintenance of God’s people .

God will bring those who trust in the arm of the flesh to a state of helplessness. It is not only morally and spiritually wrong to trust in men, it will not ultimately succeed. “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD” (Jer 17:5).

The “arm of the flesh” is the strength of the natural man – man without union with God, on his own, and operating independently of Divine intervention. Such power is contrasted with the power that comes from God. In reference to Sennacherib king Hezekiah declared, “With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles” (2 Chr 32:8).

The scattering of the power of the holy people means that all of their natural wisdom, strength, military prowess, and survival techniques would be drained of their effectiveness. The people would not be able to repel their enemies, hold to their customs, or maintain their cause. They would be reduced to what appeared to be a hopeless state.

This did occur with Antiochus Epiphanes – but not only with him. It also took place in the Egyptian bondage, and the Babylonian Captivity. It would also take place in the sacking of Jerusalem by the Romans, the oppression of Hitler, the oppression of the church, and some last days opposition of the Jews.

In this case, the language itself is more important than the events it foretells. Both nations and individuals know what it is like to have their natural powers dissipated – to be brought to a state where none but the Lord Himself can deliver. As I have already mentioned, much (but not all) of this kind of experience is a judgment of God against the lethargic and indifferent state of His people.

FINISHED

“ . . . all these things shall be finished.” Other versions read, , all these things will be completed,” NIV and “has finally come to an end.” NLT

A Divine assignment had been made concerning the duration of these trials. The aim of Antiochus, for example, was to eliminate the Jews. His purpose, however, would not be realized. He would only be allowed to drain the resources of their natural power. He would prove superior to them in the flesh, but once that had been sufficiently shown, and there was no hope of resistance, the time allotted to him would abruptly terminate, or “come to an end.” NIV

The meaning of the text, therefore, is this: when all of their power has been exhausted, and there is no hope of deliverance coming from any other source, their trial will be over. Have you not found this to be true – even on a personal level?

Over and over this point is made in Scripture. The Egyptians oppressed the Jews with hard bondage, until all of their strength was gone. Then God intervened, and Egypt lost their power. In the Babylonian captivity, I am sure the Chaldeans did not intend for that captivity to last only seventy years. Nevertheless, at the appointed time, God intervened and Babylon lost its power.

Thus we see it is God's manner to come to the aid of His people AFTER all other resources have dried up, and all human strength has been expended.

This principle has been confirmed throughout the history of God's people.

- Israel was sustained with manna and miraculous water when all other resources ran out. Manna and water from a rock were not alternative supplies, they were the only supplies (Ex 16:35; 17:3-6).
- Noah's ark was lifted above the waters, delivering he and his family, only after all other avenues of escape were removed (Gen 7:18).
- Abraham and Sarah had the child of promise only after all of their natural reproductive powers were rendered totally incapable (Rom 4:19).
- Lot was delivered from Sodom when all other possibilities were exhausted (Gen 19:15-24).
- Israel was delivered from Goliath and the Philistines only after all other hope had dried up (1 Sam 17:4-50).
- The widow of Zarephath received a miraculous supply of meal and oil only after her resources became inadequate (1 Kgs 17:9-12).
- A widow of the sons of the prophets received a miraculous supply of oil to pay her debt only after all other resources had been exhausted (2 Kgs 4:1-7).
- Peter was lifted from the ranging waves only when all hope was lost (Matt 14:31).
- Lazarus was raised from the dead only after four days had expired (John 11:39).
- Paul and those on the ship with him were saved only after all hope was "taken away" (Acts 27:20-44).

God does not allow us to be tempted "above" what we are able to bear (1 Cor 10:13). However, it is His manner to often bring us to the very end of all of our strength before delivering us.

A Point to be Seen

God has declared “vain is the help of man” (Psa 60:11; 108:12). Again it is written, “Stop trusting in man, who has but a breath in his nostrils. Of what account is he?” NIV (Isa 2:22). It is further revealed that all strength of men will fall, and those who trust in it will fall as well. “Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; And their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out His hand, Both he who helps will fall, And he who is helped will fall down ; They all will perish together” NKJV (Isa 31:3).

Modern Christianity

In keeping with this principle, the false church, spiritual Babylon, will be stripped of its pretentious power. This is because it has aligned itself with the world and its manners. It has brought the wisdom of the world within its walls, together with its business strategies, psychological expertise, and motivational techniques. It has borrowed from its educational perceptions, drinking deeply from its academic wells.

None of these things are genuine sources of spiritual power, as those with understanding know. They have not been able to sustain the world, much less are they able to sustain the church. Yet, the professed church continues to flirt with the world as though it is all harmless. When many churches want to raise money, they consult the worldly-wise on the matter – just as though there was no God. When they want to expand their numbers, they borrow from the world’s strategies, hardly considering the Head of the church, from which all valid wisdom and supplies proceed.

Even at this present time the organization, power, and influence of the modern church has not been able to stem the swelling tide of divorce, all manner of immorality, falling away, and lukewarmness within itself. Many church staffs have more problem solvers than preachers and teachers. It is all said to be an attempt to “help people.” Indeed, where such legitimate helps are administered, we give thanks, for that is not to be despised.

However, there is something greater to be seen in all of this. What we are witnessing is the scattering of the power of the Western church. God is depleting its resources and draining its powers. There are massive disruptions at the foundational level of many denominations. Hundreds of local congregations close their doors every week. North America is now said to be the only continent in the world where Christianity is not growing. Religious division is now found not only in matters of doctrine, but in the area of peer groups – youth, singles, the elderly, the married, families, etc. Division is even found in areas such as the type of music preferred.

What does all of this mean? Simply this: the power of the modern church is being scattered. There is a fundamental breakdown in Christianity itself. Its foes are overwhelming it! It is found in higher criticism, where the Scriptures themselves are critiqued to determine their accuracy and

validity. It is found in modified views of creation that have resulted from giving ear to the evolutionist – theistic evolution. It is found in the approach to, what is called, counseling. It can be seen in the new approach to a “Bible College” education.

But with all of this, sin is increasing in unparalleled measure – even within the church. Its power is being scattered! Yet, we must not allow these conditions to drive us to despair. It all indicates that something of significant magnitude is on the horizon – some great work of God. If it is true that when the power of the holy people is scattered, the termination of the oppression is at hand, then we have good reason to look up.

The Word's of Jesus

This should not surprise us. It is the very thing Jesus taught His disciples regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. He told them a time was coming when the Jews would “fall by the sword,” and be “led away captive into all nations.” He spoke of a global distress that would be a time of “signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.” He declared there would be “distress of nations” upon the earth, with “perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring.” He spoke of a time characterized by “Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” But then, He said, there would be a Divine intrusion! In the midst of these hopeless conditions “shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

At this point, our Lord affirmed the very principle that is enunciated in our text – namely, that when all appears hopeless, the trouble will be brought to an end for His people. How sweet are His words! “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh ” (Luke 21:28).

That is the principle that is to be seen in this text! When Antiochus will have beat the people down, he will not be allowed to proceed one inch further! The Lord will intervene, and the people of God “shall be delivered” (12:1). Then, and only then, “all these things shall be finished.” The same truth applies to the destruction of Jerusalem, the impact of “the man of sin,” and “the antichrist.”

Settle it in your mind that truth will ultimately triumph. When the smoke of battle finally clears, and the end of all things comes, the saints of God will be obvious victors, standing on a sea of glass (Rev 15:2) .

A QUEST FOR UNDERSTANDING

“ 8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?”

We will now see that although these words appear to be perfectly clear to the angel, they are not clear to Daniel. However, the prophet is not content to remain in a state of ignorance. He will apply his “heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things” (Ecc 7:25).

I HEARD, BUT DID NOT UNDERSTAND

“And I heard, but I understood not.” Other versions read, “ Although I heard, I did not understand,” NKJV “As for me, I heard but could not understand,” NASB and “the words came to my ears, but the sense of them was not clear to me.” BBE

It was not that the angel spoke in an unknown language. The words were clear enough. It was their meaning, or import, that eluded Daniel. An explanation had been given that apparently satisfied the angel, yet it remained beyond the reach of this man, who was noted for excelling in wisdom.

Daniel is not speaking as one who is characterized by total ignorance, but one who does not understand the matter at hand. Daniel knew a principle declared earlier through Isaiah the prophet. “I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob's descendants, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I, the LORD, speak the truth; I declare what is right” NIV (Isa 45:19). Having this truth in his heart, Daniel presses to obtain more understanding.

WHAT SHALL BE THE END?

“ . . . then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?” Other versions read, “what shall be the outcome of these events?” NASB “what will the outcome of all this be?” NIV and “How will all this finally end, my lord?” NLT

This is nearly the same question asked by one of the angels: “How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?” (v 6). The angel asked concerning the length of these events, or how long it would be until they were consummated. Here Daniel asks concerning the outcome of it all. We can tell by the answer of the angel that both questions concerned the fulfillment of the events foretold. What would be their duration, and what would result from them.

Daniel, therefore, was in accord with heavenly beings in his interests. What holy angels desired to know, he also desired to know. The reverse is true of those who are in Christ Jesus. What they have come to know in the Gospel, holy angels desire to know (1 Pet 1:12).

An Observation

There are many areas of knowledge and understanding that can be pursued. Some are intrigued by the knowledge of passing and novel things that have little importance in life. Other seek expertise in certain areas, like history, language, music, art, science, etc. Many of these areas are lawful pursuits, yet are not the proper thrust of life itself. In order to confirm the true value of matters of earnest inquiry, you might ask the following: "Are angels interested in this area of understanding?"

I am careful to say we are not to make laws in this area that make life more complicated than it already is. However, here is an area of personal evaluation that I have found valuable.

Another Observation

There are Divine messages that can be spoken, even though they may not be thoroughly understood. Such messages will be recalled and understood at the appropriate time, and must thus be declared. In our text Daniel heard something he did not thoroughly understand, yet wrote it down and passed it on to succeeding generations. He could not elaborate on the words, but he could affirm them.

It is always in order to repeat what the Lord has said. The Holy Spirit will work with such words, for the Word of God is His sword. He will bring words of truth to the remembrance of the hearers when they are needed, and grant understanding of them at the proper time.

While I do not desire to linger on this subject, it has long been an area of concern to me that so few professing Christians are noted for inquiry into the things of God. They are too content with a state of ignorance, and appear happy to continue their lives with much of the things of God unknown. Such poor souls must be encouraged to receive the "love of the truth" (2 Thess 2:10). Ultimately, it is that love that provokes a fervent and consistent quest to "know the truth." Then, and only then, will the truth be known and spiritual freedom realized.

SEALED TO THE TIME OF THEIR FULFILLMENT

" 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."

Here we confront a Divinely appointed circumstance that must be seen. A failure to perceive the principle enunciated here has occasioned all manner of “prophetic views” that lack edifying power because they do not convey “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor 2:16).

GO THY WAY

“And he said, Go thy way, Daniel.”

Daniel’s quest was a proper one, but it was not the proper time. The angel’s words – “Go thy way” – meant Daniel would not receive any further knowledge on the matter. This was not because what he asked was wrong, but because a further understanding was not available for that time. As we will see, there are “times and seasons” assigned for the appropriation of understanding, as well as for appointed events (Acts 1:7). There are times when certain things cannot be fully known or comprehended.

THE WORDS ARE CLOSED AND SEALED

“ . . . For the words are closed up and sealed . . . ” Other versions say the words are “ concealed and sealed,” NASB “are to remain secret and sealed,” NRSV “secret and shut up,” BBE and “ hidden and sealed.” YLT

The words “closed up” mean they are like words put into a box, with the lid closed. The word “sealed” means they are inaccessible, like words placed in a box with the lid closed and locked.

Daniel had much knowledge and wisdom, but it could break the Divine lock put on these words, or open the door to their meaning. When God shuts up a word, it cannot be comprehended – period! The angel knew this, so told Daniel to go on his way.

Those who say a knowledge of the original language can unlock the meaning of Scriptural texts must take this into account. Daniel knew the language in which he heard the message. He was also uncommonly wise in understanding, particularly in matters pertaining to the Lord. Yet all of that knowledge was of no avail in this matter.

Daniel’s experience was much like other prophets who spoke of “the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” Their hearts were pure. Their minds were sound. They had uncommon knowledge and understanding. Yet, when it came to the matter of the great salvation we presently enjoy, their quest for knowledge was denied.

“Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them

was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven; things which angels desire to look into.” NKJV (1 Pet 1:10-12).

There is an approach to Scripture that assumes because the Word is written, it can be thoroughly understood. But what will those who have embraced such nonsense say of the text before us? Daniel heard it. Daniel wrote it. Daniel did not understand it. Further, he was told he could not understand it – it was shut up and sealed.

Moses referred to this circumstance when He was moved to write, “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deut 29:29). Some have concluded that if it is said or written, it has revealed. Yet, here is a word that was said, and then written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Yet, at the time, was not revealed.

THE TIME OF THE END

“ . . . till the time of the end.” Other versions read, “the appointed time.” DOUAY

The words “time of the end” are not synonymous with “end of time,” as some translations suggest. The phrase “the end of the time ” means the conclusion of the time, or period, that was prophesied – when the events had transpired.

Versions that read “end of time” include, NAB, and NAU. Other versions also cause confusion by reading “end time” (NASB This is wholly inappropriate, and a little thought should easily confirm it. The angel was not saying the words were forever closed, or for as long as time existed. The word “end” refers to the events that were prophesied, not the conclusion of time itself. In other words, what was said could not be understood until the events themselves had taken place.

In our previous lesson we dealt with a similar word – one that was “shut up” until the time of the end (v 4). At that time I gave the example of Peter on the day of Pentecost. It was when the events prophesied by Joel and David came to pass that their prophecies could be expounded. Until then, they were “shut up.” (Lesson 38, pages 38-39). Similar events occurred at the birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1:68-79), the birth of Jesus (Matt 2:5-6), the betrayal of Jesus (Matt 27:5-10), and the resurrection of Jesus (Lk 24:5-8).

When They Happen

Prophecies of the order of the one we are considering are opened when they are fulfilled, or occur. At the time of the prophecy, enough details are provided so that those with faith will be able to recognize its fulfillment. However, it simply is not possible to have perfect understanding of prophesied

events until the “begin” to take place (Lk 21:28). Divine predictions are, in a sense, vague, even though elements of specificity are there. For instance, the place of the Messiah’s birth was specified by Micah (Mic 5:2). However, that prophecy was not seen with clarity until the Savior was actually born. The same is true of the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28), and the acceptance of the Gentiles (Isa 49:6).

What prophecy was ever comprehended with any detail prior to its fulfillment? The promised Seed (Gen 3:15)? The flood (Gen 6:17)? The deliverance of Israel from Egypt after 400 years of affliction (Gen 15:13)? The Babylonian captivity (Gen 29:10)? The coming of the Messiah (Isa 32:1-4)? None of these things were understood in detail until they began to come to pass.

This is why there is a certain vagueness in Paul’s reference to “the man of sin” (2 Thess 2:3) and John’s reference to “antichrist” (1 John 2:18), “the beast” (Rev 13:18), and “the false prophet” (Rev 19:20). Many have taken in their hand to precisely define coming events. By putting certain texts together, they imagine they are able to tell us more than the Holy Spirit did. They think they are able to tell us the sequence and detail of events to come before they happen – even though such details are not clearly articulated by Scripture.

Such men are in great error. Unless the events that have been prophesied have actually come to pass, their theology of last things is only pretension. God never has allowed a thorough understanding of things to come until they actually began to occur.

More Can Be Known

There are dimensions of truth that can be more fully known in our time than during the first century. That is not owing to any superiority on our part. Rather, it is the nature of God’s dealings with men to clarify what He has said when the things He declared come to pass. Who could have hoped, for example, to comprehend the new birth prior to Pentecost? Or the marvelous scope of the New Covenant prior to its realization?

A Temporary Sealing

Thus the prophecy of Daniel was sealed temporarily – until the time those things came to pass. Then, the details of the prophecy would become more apparent to those with faith.

The Principle Taught by Jesus

During our Lord’s earthly ministry, He often spoke of things the people did not comprehend. A single example will suffice to confirm this point -- namely that when the reality comes to pass, it can then be understood. “I have many things to say and to judge of you: but He that sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him. They understood not that He spake to them of the Father. Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things”

(John 8:28).

This is precisely the principle of which Jesus spoke on the night of His betrayal. For example, He said the following of His betrayal by one of them – something they were not able to grasp at the time. However, when it came to pass, it would become apparent to them. “I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me. Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He ” (John 13:18-19).

The same was true of when Jesus earlier washed His disciples’ feet. At that time they did not realize what He was really doing. Therefore He said to them, “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter ” (John 13:7).

Ezekiel’s Prophecy of the Dry Bones

The same principle is seen in Ezekiel’s prophecy concerning Israel – when they were shown to him as a valley of dry bones. “And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves , O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land : then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD” (Ezek 37:14).

A Restatement of the Principle

Allow me to affirm this principle once again. The thorough understanding of “things to come,” as declared prophetically, is only available when they begin to come to pass. Such things cannot be opened by scholarship, language expertise, historical proficiency, or human reasoning.

Neither can they be perfectly clarified by piecing prophecies together. Daniel had received several prophecies – many of them, relating to very things mentioned in this text. Yet he was not able to put them all together and thus map out their meaning – and he was a gifted prophet, “greatly beloved” of God!

Never Apparent to Unbelief

These things would never be apparent to those in the grip of unbelief. This is why the types, shadows, and prophecies concerning the coming Messiah and the New Covenant remain obscure to Abraham’s offspring according to the flesh. That is why the Spirit affirms, “But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away” (2 Cor 3:16). In this case, the prophecies have been fulfilled, meaning “we have a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet 1:19). Those prophecies are now unsealed, and are no longer shut up. Yet, unbelief seals them to those without faith.

Because of this circumstance, it is possible for the language to apply to more than one historical fulfillment. This principle can be seen in a statement made by Hosea. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt” (Hos 11:1). Reaching backward, that applied to the exodus of Israel from Egypt. Looking forward, it applied to taking the young child Jesus into Egypt during the threat of Herod (Matt 2:14-15). The former provided an understanding of what happened in the past. The latter, however, could only be profitably known when it came to pass – when Jesus was brought out of Egypt at Herod’s death.

THE LINE WILL BE DRAWN BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

“ 10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.”

The angel now elaborates briefly on “the time of the end,” or when these prophecies would be fulfilled. This is the context in which the sealed prophecy will be opened, making it more understandable. However, it will not become apparent to everyone.

PURIFIED, WHITE, AND TRIED

“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried . . . ”

The trial of reference was induced by the condition of the God’s people – “by reason of transgression” (8:12). Thus, when they are effectively corrected, their oppression will be “cut short in righteousness” (Rom 9:28). That is, for “many” the chastening will yield great benefits. They will be “purified,” “made white,” and proven by trial.

Let us now behold the effects of the atrocities experienced during the malicious reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. These same effects would be realized in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, any latter day oppression of the Jews, and the rise of “the man of sin.”

Many Shall Be Purified

Some versions read “purged,” NASB “shall purify themselves.” ASV “make themselves clean,” BBE “will be cleansed.” NJB

Strictly speaking, the cleansing produced by oppression will not be self-induced. However, that oppression will produce in “many” the strong and unquenchable desire to be clean and free from sin. Because that desire will come from the heart, it will be realized. The opposition and persecution would cause these “many” to want to be pure, and to zealously seek that purity!

Many Shall Be Made White

The word “purified” refers to the process . The word “white” relates to the result of that process. Being made white is similar to having impurities “sifted” out through affliction (Lk 22:31-32). When a person is “made white,” they are no longer “spotted by the world” (James 1:27). Unacceptable manners are thus removed, which leads to Divine acceptance. They are “white” in His eyes.

Many Shall Be Tried

The grievous times that were coming were a period of testing – when the faith and love of the people would be carefully examined and made known.

The wilderness wanderings of the Israelites were a time of testing, when what was really in the heart of the people was pushed to the surface. Thus it is written, “And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart , whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no” (Deut 8:2). That is the kind of thing that would be accomplished in the trials of which the angel has spoken.

Such trials, however, are intended to do more than make known hidden things, whether good or evil. They are also the prelude to the experience of good things. Therefore it was said to Israel, “Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that He might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end” (Deut 8:16).

The angel, therefore, tells Daniel that what is ahead is being administered by the Lord, not Antiochus Epiphanes, or some despot in the future. Although very difficult and oppressive, the experience will purify many, making them white, and bringing out their spiritual strengths.

THE WICKED SHALL DO WICKEDLY

“ . . . but the wicked shall do wickedly. . . ” Other versions read, “the wicked will continue to be wicked,” NIV “the wicked shall continue to act wickedly,” NRSV and “the transgressors will transgress.” Septuagint

“The wicked” does not refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, or some other enemy of the Lord’s people. These are “the wicked” among the people of God. Prior to the trial, they did not appear to be wicked – yet they actually were. The trial brought out what they were, driving their wickedness to the surface. Historically, these were the ones who sided with Antiochus. They were the ones who caved in to the Romans when they destroyed Jerusalem. In the history of the church, they are the ones who yield to a “form of godliness” that denies the power thereof (2 Tim 3:5).

The trial, though hard and extended, will not enable the wicked to become better. The righteous are made better by trial and chastening (Rom 5:3; Heb 12:11) , but the wicked are not. During perilous times “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse” (2 Tim 3:13).

The Manner of the Kingdom

That is the manner of the Kingdom: trials, testings, and chastening, are an appointed means of discovering the basic person – who people really are. When all manner of confusion and erroneous teaching broke out in Corinth, the Spirit explained the reason for such an outbreak. “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you ,” or No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval ” NIV (1 Cor 11:19).

There is a sense in which, Antiochus Epiphanes and “the man of sin” are threshing instruments (Isa 41:15), used of God to purify and make white the remnant, while exposing all the more those who are wicked.

The Righteous Go Through Trial

Those who imagine the Lord necessarily removes the godly before periods of trial are not in their sound mind. God can, and often does, spare some from trial, as He did the church at Philadelphia (Rev 3:10). That, however, is the exception to the rule. Their deliverance was because their true character had already been made known. Normally, the people of God are in the trial, in order that their true value may be discovered. It was the Israelites, not the Egyptians, who were proved in the wilderness. Floods, dens of lions and furnaces of fire are where the righteous are discovered, and through which they survive.

The Response of the Wicked

But when the wicked pass through such times, they only become more wicked. This is made known in the pouring forth of the seven vials of Revelation. When the fifth angel poured his vial upon the throne of “the beast,” it brought out the corruption of his empire. His kingdom “became full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.” Instead of calling upon the name of the Lord, “ they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of

their deeds” NKJV (Rev 16:10-11).

Those who choose to follow the world and satisfy unlawful lusts must know this: in the hour of trial, they will become worse, not better. Sin gradually weakens both nations and individuals, putting them into a state of sleep – “the sleep of death” (Psa 13:3). Eventually it renders them incapable of any favorable response to the working of the Lord, even when it is severe judgment.

THE WICKED WILL NOT UNDERSTAND

“ . . . and none of the wicked shall understand . . . ”

Not a single wicked person will be able to make an association of the coming atrocities with the God of heaven. They will not see it as a trial, or an opportunity to be “purified” and “made white,” but will see it only as a threat that cannot be resisted.

Here is one of the enormous penalties of being “wicked.” Such a condition makes one deaf to the voice of the Lord, and blind to His workings. What appears very evident to the godly is completely hidden to the wicked. Thus they stumble on in their sin until they fall over the precipice of eternal ruin. I have often heard ungodly people say they would turn to the Lord when their time comes. They speak as though sin has no impact upon their minds and hearts. They are wrong – seriously wrong! As long as a person lives in sin, deterioration is advancing in heart, mind, soul, and strength. It finally reaches the point where, even when epochal events take place, the wicked are not able to see anything in those epochs, and so they “add sin to sin” (Isa 30:1).

There is a sense in which you can only teach the righteous, or godly. There can certainly be announcements and proclamations made to the wicked through which the Spirit will work. But spiritual instruction is not for the wicked, for they cannot learn until they are first convicted. In particular, things that can be learned from trial cannot be picked up by the wicked. It is still true, “ none of the wicked shall understand.”

THE WISE WILL UNDERSTAND

“ . . . but the wise shall understand.” Other versions read, “but those who have insight will understand,” NASB “but all will be made clear to those who are wise,” BBE and “ Only those who are wise will know what it means .” NLT

Even when the prophecy was unsealed, it would only be understood by the wise, who have some understanding of the ways of the Lord.

In the final assault of Antiochus, this did, in fact, take place. The Maccabees, under the awakened leadership of Judas Maccabeus refused to yield to him. After refusing to defend themselves on the Sabbath day, they rose up in zeal and defeated Antiochus' armies. Their zeal flowed from their understanding. They saw the significance of what was happening, and sided with the Lord. The following account provides some of the details of that occasion.

“He (Antiochus Epiphanes) therefore left Lysias, one of his highest lieutenants, to take charge of his kingdom, from the River Euphrates to the confines of Egypt, and having entrusted his son Antiochus to his care, and enjoined Lysias to conquer Judaea and destroy the nation of the Jews, he went into Persia. The success of Judas called for immediate attention. The governor of Jerusalem was urgent in his entreaties for assistance; Lysias therefore sent an army of 20,000 men, under the command of Nicanor and Gorgias, into Judaea. It was followed by another of the same number, with an addition of 700 horses, under Ptolemy Macron, the son of Dorymenes, as commander-in chief. The united forces encamped in the plains of Emmaus. To oppose the formidable host Judas could only muster 6000 men at Mizpeh. Here, as Samuel had done a thousand years before at a like period of national calamity, he fasted and prayed, and, in compliance with the Mosaic injunction, advised those who were newly married, or had built houses, and the like, to return to their homes. This reduced his number to one half. The heroic spirit of Judas, however, rose against every difficulty, and he marched towards Emmaus. B.C. 166. Having heard that Gorgias had been dispatched with a force of 6000 men to surprise him in the passes by night he instantly resolved to attack the enemies' camp. He rushed upon them unexpectedly, and completely routed them; so that when Gorgias returned baffled and weary, he was dismayed at finding his camp in flames. In the brief struggle which ensued the Jews were victorious, and took much spoil. The year following, Lysias gathered together an army of 60,000 chosen men, with 5000 horsemen, went up in person to the hill-country of Judaea, and pitched his camp at a place called Bethsura, the Bethzur of the Old Testament. Here Judas met him with 10,000 men, attacked his vanguard, and slew 5000 of them, whereupon Lysias retreated with the remainder of his army to Antioch. After this series of triumphs Judas proceeded to Jerusalem. There he found the sanctuary desolate, shrubs growing in the courts of it and the chambers of the priests thrown down; so he set to work at once to purify the holy places and restore the worship of God (1 Macc. 4:36, 41-53) on the 25th of Kislev, exactly three years after its profanation (1 Mace 1:59; Grimm on 1 Macc. 4:59). In commemoration of this cleansing of the Temple, the Jews afterwards kept for eight days annually a festival which was called Lights, and was known as the Feast of Dedication (John 10:22). McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia of Bible Knowledge

SUMMATION

Thus the angel informs Daniel that the events he has foretold will not be comprehended until they begin to take place. However, even then, only the wise will be given to discern them, and none of the wicked will understand. The angel, therefore, confirms a truth given to Daniel many years previously, when he was a young man. “He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding” (Dan 2:21).

Let the religious prognosticators and sensationalists learn from this passage to cease their attempts to break Divinely imposed seals! We must be content to know there are times during which

certain events cannot be fully known, even though they can be believed. In the wake of such knowledge, we must subdue fleshly curiosity and learn more fully to live by faith. At the proper time, such noble souls will understand.

ONE THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY DAYS

“ 11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.”

Before Daniel goes his way, the angel has a further word for him. It is one of those words that will be comprehended when the things involved begin to come to pass.

A number of different time period are revealed to Daniel.

- “Two thousand, three hundred days” – 8:14 (From setting up of the abomination until the cleansing of the Temple).
- “Time, times, and a half” – 12:7 (The time it took to scatter the power of the holy people).
- “One thousand, two hundred, and ninety days” – 12:11 (What was accomplished is not specified).
- “One thousand, three hundred, and thirty-five days” – 12:12 (What was accomplished is not specified).

All of the expressions are obvious clear to the angel, but they are not so readily apparent to those upon the earth. Further, they all apply to the period during which Antiochus (who sprang from the four rulers who followed Alexander the Great) ravaged Jerusalem and defiled the temple. All of this indicates that something of unusually epochal proportions occurred at that time. It does not mean these words are limited to that time. However, something of a more revelatory nature occurred then that is a sort of index to spiritual understanding.

FROM THE TIME

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away . . .” Other versions read, “from the time the regular sacrifice is abolished,” NASB “from the time the daily sacrifice is abolished,” NIV

and “from the time that the regular burn offering is taken away.” NRSV

There is a sense in which the daily sacrifice was ended when the Lord Jesus laid down His life a ransom for many. This, I understand, is the point of Daniel 9:27, which is associated with the Messiah. However, that cannot be the point of reference here, for that did not relate to the setting up of the “abomination that makes desolate,” mentioned in the next clause. This prophecy refers to the event mentioned previously (8:11-12 and 11:31). It can also apply to the destruction of Jerusalem. In both of those occasions the Temple was profaned, not merely terminated as the center of worship and service.

THE ABOMINATION THAT MAKES DESOLATE

“ . . . and the abomination that maketh desolate set up . . . ” This phrase also distinguishes the time. Historically, the abomination was “set up” when an idol-altar was placed on top of the altar of burnt offerings, and swine’s flesh sacrificed to a false God. This so profaned the Temple that it had to be brought to desolation.

A THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND NINETY DAYS

“ . . . there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.” From the time the abomination was set up there would be 1,290 days. The angel does not specify what will occur at that time. He also does not signify if that would mark the time of something occurring in the heavenlies (like a spiritual prince being cast down), or upon earth (like the end of an empire or the coming of the Messiah).

After all is said and done, I must acknowledge I am uncertain as to the precise fulfillment of this prophecy. There are some compelling reasons that have driven me to this conclusion.

- The angel does not identify what will occur at the conclusion of this period – or if a conclusion is even the point.
- If we measure 1,290 days from the setting up of the abomination, we cannot with confidence identify some epoch taking place upon the earth.
- We are dealing with a message that was closed up until the time of its fulfillment. Even then, only those who were wise would understand. It would not be historically apparent.

There are some who have taken in hand to identify this period with other events, ranging from the fall of Antiochus, and the rise of the coming of the Messiah, to the rise of Mohammedanism, and a coming antichrist. This has required shifting the calendar from a thirty-day month a 365 day year. For some it is necessary to convert the days to years, and others have mathematical formulae to assist them in proving their point.

I am not comfortable adopting such approaches to Scripture . I therefore acknowledge I am not sure what is conveyed by this word. It is difficult for me to accept that this not somehow related to all that has been said about the fading Grecian Empire, and particularly as it regarded Antiochus Epiphanes. If the angel changed subjects, it was not apparent.

I will reserve some comments on certain lessons to be learned from this text until after the following verse.

ONE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY FIVE DAYS

“ 12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.”

Something of nature of life of faith is seen in this word. There is some specificity, but not enough to formulate an elaborate teaching.

BLESSED HE THAT THAT WAITS AND COMES

Daniel has received a word concerning great trial, spoil, and defamation. From one point of view, the word brought news of a gloomy future. However, the trial would come to an conclusion, and do so at the appointed time. Things would be made clearer, and the prophecy would be unsealed. The wise would then understand what they could not understand at the time.

Blessed

“Blessed is he . . .” Other versions read, “How blessed is he,” NASB “Happy are those,” NRSV “A blessing will be on the man,” BBE and “Oh the blessedness of him.” YLT

The word “blessed” is a large one in meaning, involving happiness and great satisfaction. To be “blessed” is to recognize the experience of the favor of God. It is to realize the hand of the Lord for good, and to be joyous over it. Jesus contrasted blessing with mourning (Matt 5:4). Isaiah spoke of the “oil of joy” that was granted in the place of “mourning” (Isa 61:3). Blessing is more than mere euphoria, or a

feeling of well being and elation. This is the “joy of faith” (Phil 1:25) that is able to associate personal experience with the promises and mercy of the Living God .

Waiting

“ . . . that waiteth . . .” Other versions read “keeps waiting,” NASB “who persevere,” NRSV “goes on waiting,” BBE and “who has patience and perseveres.” NAB

Waiting is a posture of faith. It is not being idle, but being expectant. While one waits, he continues the race, keeps on believing, and “holds on their way” (Job 17:9). Those who “wait” continue the pilgrimage of faith even when it leads through the Red Sea, the terrible wilderness, famine, or persecution and the sword!

Daniel has received word about a future in which his people will be subjected to all manner of hardship. He has even been told it will be owing to their own transgression. Yet, it will all come to an end. The details of these things have often been very sparse, and sometimes no details have been provided at all. This is all too difficult for the flesh to handle. Upon hearing of such things, some conclude there is no point to being faithful, and thus abandon their God.

But there are those who see a glorious future beyond all times of trial and hardship. In the prospect of that future, they “wait patiently,” enduring all manner of difficulty, and refusing to abandon the strait and narrow way in favor an easier and less cumbered path. Such will receive the blessing!

Coming

“ . . . and cometh to . . .” Other versions read, “attains to,” NASB “reaches,” NIV “arrives,” ESV “until,” NAB “reaches,” NIB and “remain until.” NLT

There was an undefined goal to be reached – a point that would vindicate all who continued faithful . For them, the point was not merely enduring, but to arrive at the goal – to enter into a blessed conclusion.

There are some conclusions, or appointed destinies, that have been defined. They include death (Heb 9:27), the resurrection, or changing of the body (1 Cor 15:51), the coming of the Lord (Matt 24:44), and the day of judgment (2 Cor 5:10). In these, the time has not been revealed. In our text, the time has been revealed, but the event or object has not!

A blessing is pronounced upon all who arrive at this point of time in a state of readiness. These

are those who have not been distracted by the trials that were sure to come.

THE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY FIVE DAYS

“ . . . the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.”

It is apparent from the tone of these words that the angel knew very well the specifics of these words. He specifies a particular period: “ THE 1,335 days.” NASB

He does not tell Daniel when the days will begin, when they will conclude, or the identity of their objective. Nevertheless, they are there because they have been Divinely appointed.

What We DO Know of These Days

First , we know from what is said of them that these are days of testing and trial, for they must be endured. Survivors must “wait” in faith until they are passed. They must endure.

Second , these are appointed days, not a random and ungoverned period. They are not 1,335 days, but THE 1,335 days. They are under Divine supervision, and are not thus not capable of separating the trusting one from God.

Third , there is a special benefit to be obtained by all who survive this period of testing – who “keep the faith” during the somewhat lengthy trial.

Fourth , this is a period extending beyond the 1,290 days, being 45 days longer. Here is an extended period of some kind – a sort of additional testing.

Divine Ambiguity

Some things are made known to the sons of men that remain relatively obscure. The chief of these is the coming of the Lord, of which it is said, “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Mat 25:13). Mark says of Christ’s coming, “ye know not when the time is ” (Mark 13:33).

However, even though such days and times remain unknown, faith can take what has been said and prepare for the time, living triumphantly while waiting patiently. Faith does not need to have particulars! Just tell faith a blessing is coming, and it will live in expectation. Tell faith a trial is coming, it will live in a state of sobriety and preparation. We have such a text before us.

Nothing in the text indicates that the 1,335 days start at the same time as the 1,290, although that is quite possible. The 1,290 day period is said to begin with the setting up of the “abomination of desolation” (12:11). Earlier, a period of 2,300 days was initiated when the daily sacrifice was taken away, lasting until the sanctuary was cleansed (8:13-14). There was also the period of “a time, times, and a half,” the beginning of which is not made known, although the time of cessation is made known (12:7).

1,335 day period is 45 days longer than 1,290 days. There is evidence that Antiochus Epiphanes died forty-five days after the overthrow of his armies by the Maccabees. After that, the trials of the Jews were lifted, and they entered into a time of relative peace. However, some contend this cannot be derived with certainty. I will leave it to you to determine the worthiness of such a thought.

It does not seem to me that a specific period called “the 1,335 days” be considered in such a manner. Remember, it is not the beginning of this period that is the point, but its conclusion – which is not specified. By contrast, note the following.

- 2,300 days (8:14). The length of time the daily sacrifice ceases, and during which the sanctuary is trodden down. It concludes with the cleansing of the sanctuary.
- Time, times, and a half (12:7). A time assigned to wonders declared by the angel. They would conclude when the power of the holy people was scattered.
- 1,290 days (12:11). These days commence with the taking away of the daily sacrifice, when the abomination of desolation is set up. The events related the cessation are not specified. They undoubtedly include the cleansing of the Temple, and the restoration of the daily sacrifices.
- 1,335 days (12:12). Neither the beginning nor ending are identified, nor are the matters that will be accomplished or done during the period.

Thus Daniel has heard of a period during which the daily sacrifice would cease, and the Temple be defiled (2,300 days) . He has been told of a time during which the power of the people would be dissipated, and they would be reduced to a state of utter helplessness (time, times, and a half) . A period beginning with the setting up of the “abomination that makes desolate” (1,290 days) . He has also been told of a period of time that will conclude with great blessing for those who wait, passing through the period in faith (1,335 days) .

Something to be Noted

You must determine how you will view such texts as this. You may very well desire to perfectly

correlate it with history. In fact, you may be able to develop some time table that makes sense to you. That is your prerogative.

However, your view must have an edification quotient to be worthy of your embrace. It must assist you in making preparation for the future, whether it is one of trial or blessing. It must assign a greater value to faith and hope than to historical fact and circumstance.

Living With this in Mind

There are things about the future, the details of which, you do not know. There are periods plotted for you on the trestle boards of eternity that have not been made known to you. You do not know when they will begin, or when they will end. They are like 1,335 days. Faith, however, will make you equal things unknown. You can rest in the Lord, who will surely direct your paths (Prov 3:6).

APPROXIMATE CHRONOLOGICAL TABLES

An approximately chronological time table is provided before for your reference. This covers a sizeable segment of time, beginning with the Babylonian captivity, and concluding with the inter-testamental period covered in the last revelations given to Daniel. The period is remarkable for length, covering more than 445 years. This does not include His references to the vicarious death of the Lord Jesus (), His enthronement in glory (7:13-14), the day of judgment (7:10), and the resurrection of the dead (12:2).

- Jehoiakim, — 608-597 B.C.
- Zedekiah. — 597-588 B.C.
- Jerusalem taken, — 588 B.C.
- Death of Nebuchadrezzar, — 561 B.C.
- Evil-merodach, — 561 B.C.
- Neriglissar, — 559 B.C.
- Laborosoarchod, — 555 B.C.
- Nabunaid, — 555 B.C.
- Capture of Babylon, — 538 B.C.
- Decree of Cyrus, — 536 B.C.
- Cambyses, — 529 B.C.
- Darius, son of Hystaspes — 521, B.C.
- Dedication of the Second Temple — 516 B.C.
- Battle of Salamis, — 480 B.C.
- Ezra — 458 B.C.
- Nehemiah — 444 B.C.
- Nehemiah's reforms, — 428 B.C.
- Malachi, — 420 B.C.
- Alexander the Great invades Persia, — 334 B.C.

- Battle of Granicus, — 334 B.C.
- Battle of Issus, — 333 B.C.
- Battle of Arbela, — 331 B.C.
- Death of Darius Codomannus. — 330 B.C.
- Death of Alexander, — 323 B.C.
- Ptolemy Soter captures Jerusalem, — 320 B.C.
- Simon the Just high priest, — 310 B.C.
- Beginning of Septuagint translation, — 284 B.C.
- Antiochus the Great conquers Palestine, (?)— 202 B.C.
- Accession of Antiochus Epiphanes, 176 B.C. — Daniel 7:8, 20.
- Joshua (Jason), brother of Onias III., gets the priesthood by bribery, and promotes Hellenism among the Jews 174 B.C. — Daniel 11:22-24, 9:26.
- First expedition of Antiochus against Egypt. — Murder of Onias III., 171 B.C.
- His second expedition, 170 B.C.
- His plunder of the Temple and massacre at Jerusalem, 170 B.C.— Daniel 8:9, 10; 11:28.
- Third expedition of Antiochus, 169 B.C. — Daniel 11:29, 30.
- Apollonius, the general of Antiochus, advances against Jerusalem with an army of 22,000. — Massacre. — The abomination of desolation in the Temple. — Antiochus carries off some of the holy vessels (1 Macc. 1:25); forbids circumcision; burns the books of the Law; puts down the daily sacrifice, 169-8 B.C.— Daniel 7:21, 24, 25; 8:11-13, 24, 25; 11:30-35, etc.
- Desecration of the Temple. — Jews compelled to pay public honour to false gods. Faithfulness of scribes, and *Chasidim*. — Revolt of Maccabees, 167 B.C.— Daniel 11:34, 35; 12:3.
- Jewish war of independence. Death of the priest Mattathias. — Judas Maccabaeus defeats Lysias 166 B.C.
- Battles of Beth-zur and Emmaus. — Purification of Temple (Kisleu 25) 165 B.C. — Daniel 7:11, 26; 8:14; 11:45, etc. Death of Antiochus Epiphanes 163 B.C.
- Judas Maecabaeus dies in battle at Eleasa, 161 B.C.

These dates are only approximate, but provide a consistent basis for comparison. They also reveal a remarkable diversity of experience.

REST FOR NOW, YET DANIEL WILL STAND IN HIS LOT

“ 13 But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the day.”

Mindful of the holy prophet, “greatly beloved,” the mighty angel leaves Daniel with a word of comfort and consolation. He knows the great heart of the prophet yearns to know the meaning of what has been revealed to him – to comprehend the purposes of God and know them more fully. His words to Daniel will ministry to our spirits also.

GO THY WAY

“But go thou thy way . . .” The time of the revelation has come to a close. The prophet must go

his way, resuming the normal course of his life. He must leave the mountain, and it was, and head for the valley. He will leave carrying a storehouse of holy considerations – things to ponder, and upon which he may meditate. This has been the answer to his prayer concerning the land of Judah, the Temple, and his people, and how abundant it has been! Heavenly evil principalities have made every effort to stop it. Daniel's physical constitution could not stand up under the weight of the message. He needed supernatural strength just to hear it, to say nothing of comprehending it. Now he must leave, as it was, the holy of holies and return to the holy place and the outer court. Secondly, he must return to do the business of Cyrus, king of Persia. Primarily, he will take up the mantle of Divine service once again.

It is estimated that the Babylonian captivity began around 606 B.C. At that time Daniel was a young man – probably somewhere between thirteen and eighteen. The Captivity lasted for seventy years, concluding in 536 B.C. At that time, Daniel would have been somewhere between 83 and 88 years old. The revelation recorded in the last three chapters was received during the third year of king Cyrus, around 534 B.C., at which time Daniel would have been between 87 and 92 years of age.

Therefore, when the angel says “Go thy way,” he probably meant Daniel's life would soon conclude. Jewish tradition places his death in the year following this revelation.

UNTIL THE END

“ . . . till the end be . . . ” Other versions read, “until the time appointed,” DOUAY and “go on to the end.” YLT

There are at least three possible meanings to this expression.

- The end of Daniel's life.
- The time when the prophecies would be fulfilled.
- The end of all time itself.

There is a sense in which all of them are true.

- Daniel was to live the remainder of his life in faith, looking forward to the fulfillment of all things.
- Because only the body died, he would continue awaiting the fulfillment of the angel's words in another realm.

- He would await the conclusion of time itself, when all would be made plain, and he would know as also he was known.

Because of the words that follow, the emphasis must be placed on latter, even there is some truth to them all.

THOU SHALT REST

“ . . . for thou shalt rest . . . ” Other versions read, “enter into rest,” NASB “take your rest,” BBE and “you will rest.” NLT

This refers to the “rest” into which the faithful enter at death. In the spiritually primitive times of the patriarch Job, saints who passed through troublous times were depicted as “prisoners resting together” in death (Job 3:18).

After Jesus’ exaltation, the Spirit spoke more expressly on this matter. Those who “die in the Lord” are said to “rest from their labors” (Rev 14:13). In their death they pass beyond the region of trouble and trial, being “present with the Lord” (2 Cor 5:8).

What a pleasant contemplation that must have been for the aged prophet. No more experience of captivity, threats from an angry king, lion’s dens, or the likes. However, although his life on the earth ended, he continued to remain in expectation “until the end” of all things, when the Lord will “make all things new” (Rev 21:5).

THOU SHALL STAND IN THY LOT

“ . . . and stand in thy lot at the end of the day.” Other versions read, “and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days,” NKJV “and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age,” NASB “you shall rise for your reward at the end of the days,” NRSV “and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days,” RSV “you will rise again to receive the inheritance set aside for you .” NLT

What a marvelous picture of the outcome of the life of faith and faithfulness! Just as the various tribes of Israel received a particular inheritance in Canaan (Num 26:55; Josh 14:2; 19:51), so each believer will receive a particular inheritance in glory . How blessed will be the inheritance of Daniel, whose ministry in a foreign land extended over the reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus.

There is not a single sin recorded against this man. Every time the Lord sent a message to him

he received it, pondered it, inquiring further into matters that were not clear to him. He was a faithful custodian of the truth, recording, protecting, and declaring it. When he was given a message of judgment for a king, he delivered it. When He was Divinely protected, he confessed it before men. When he prayed, the Lord answered him. Over his long and productive life he maintained a consistent interest in God's land, His Temple, and His people.

Daniel was one of three men God associated with deliverance (Noah, Daniel, and Job – Ezek 14:14,20). The wisdom he possessed was used as a point of Divine comparison (Ezek 28:3).

And what do you think his “lot” will be? Surely, he will be a prince in the world to come, with a God-glorifying stewardship. There is a place and an inheritance reserved for Daniel, and he will obtain it at the conclusion of time. He received much from God in this world. He will receive infinitely more in the world to come, and the mighty angel from heaven knew it!

THE APPLICATION

We cannot leave this text without drawing attention to the inheritance that is reserved for the saints of God. In a way, the words spoken to Daniel can be said to every person in Christ Jesus: “at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.” NIV Much is made of this by the Holy Spirit, and much should be made of it by us.

- **A Promised Eternal Inheritance.** “And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance ” (Heb 9:15). Remove that inheritance, and even the death of Christ becomes meaningless.
- **Begotten to an Inheritance.** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet 1:3-4). Remove that inheritance, and there is no real point to being born again.
- **In Christ we Obtain an Inheritance.** “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance , being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph 1:11). Remove that inheritance, and there is no proof that anything else had,. Or can, be received.
- **The Holy Spirit is the Pledge of the Full Inheritance.** “ In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:13b-14). Remove that inheritance, and the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit become vague and beyond understanding.

- **We Live in Anticipation of the Inheritance.** “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance : for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col 3:23-24). Remove that inheritance, and there remains no real reason for living.

As believers, we will be noted for some kind of emphasis – some primary thought to which we always revert, and upon which we always build. The “eternal inheritance ” of the saints is an integral part of any valid theological emphasis . Whether a person wishes to acknowledge it or not, there is no true value in a religion that does not make much of the inheritance that is “reserved in heaven for us” (1 Pet 1:4). Such a religion should be abandoned.

JESUS’ REFERENCE TO THIS TEXT

The passage with which we have dealt was referenced by the Lord Jesus, confirming its criticality to our understanding. The occasion during which the reference occurred was, what is commonly called the Olivet discourse.

THE BACKGROUND

Following the witnessing of a widow casting all that she had into the Temple treasury, Jesus drew the attention of His disciples to what she had done. “Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living” (Mark 12:43-44).

Alarmed by His words, the disciples spoke to Him as “He went out of the Temple.” As though suggesting the Temple could not be maintained with such meager offerings they said, “Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!” (Mark 13:1). Jesus responded, “Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Mark 13:2).

Following this, Jesus “sat upon the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple.” There, in full view that majestic building, “Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately,” “Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Mark 13:3-4; Matt 24:3). He then delivered some of the most detailed events in all of history. He covered three episodes, addressed in the questions of the first four men called to follow Him – Peter, Andrew, James, and John. First, the destruction of the Temple (“these things”). Second, the sign of His coming. Third the of the end of the world (Matt 24:3).

Time does not permit a delineation of His coming and the end of the world. However, in addressing the destruction of Jerusalem in general, and the Temple in particular, the Lord Jesus referred to Daniel's prophecy. He accents a sin of the greatest magnitude, which He terms an abomination that mandates desolation. Here are His words.

“When ye therefore shall see THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION, SPOKEN OF BY DANIEL THE PROPHET, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes” (Mat 24:15-18; Mark 13:14-16).

Notice that Jesus applied the very principle made known in our text, namely that when the events begin to take place, an understanding of them can be obtained .

Concerning the appointed destruction of Jerusalem Jesus provided some remarkable details. These things were carried out with the Roman armies sacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

- The destruction was appointed because Jerusalem did not know the day of its visitation by God through His Son (Luke 19:44).
- Their enemies would build an embankment against them (Lk 19:43a).
- Their enemies would encompass them, hemming them in on every side (Lk 19:43b).
- The city would be laid to the ground, together with the children within her walls (Lk 19:44a).
- One stone would not be left upon another (Lk 19:44b).
- There would be “great tribulation” in those days (Matt 24:21).
- Unless God shortened the days, no flesh would be saved (Matt 24:22).
- These would be days of vengeance – Divine vengeance, that “all things written may be fulfilled” (Lk 21:22).
- There would be “great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people” (Lk 21:23).
- They would “fall by the sword and led away captive into all nations” (Lk 21:24).

- Jerusalem would be “trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Lk 21:24).

In profound love for His people, the Lord urged the people to prepare for these awesome events.

- When they saw the events begin, they were to “flee into the mountains” (Matt 24:16; Mk 13:14; Lk 21:21).
- Those in other countries were not to come into the city (Lk 21:21).
- They were not to take time to remove anything from their houses (Matt 24:17; Mk 13:15).
- Those in the field were not to return home to gather their clothes together (Matt 24:18; Mk 13:16).
- A woe was pronounced upon those who were either about to deliver children, or were succoring them (Matt 24:19; Mk 13:17; Lk 21:23).
- They were to pray that their escape would not be in the winter or on the Sabbath day (Matt 24:20; Mk 13:18).
- When they saw Jerusalem encircled with armies, they would know the desolation was at hand (Lk 21:20).

All of this because they “did not know the time of their visitation!” The very thought of being unaware of Divine visitations should strike fear into every person.

Jesus gave two indicators to the people that the judgment was upon them. First, the city encircled by armies. Second, and of primary importance here, “the abomination of desolation” mentioned by Daniel.

This confirms that the revelation given to Daniel was broad in its scope, and not confined to judgments brought upon the people prior to Christ. During the inter-testamental period “the abomination of desolation” referred to the blasphemous act of Antiochus Epiphanes, when he defiled the temple with an altar to an idol, and the sacrifice of a swine, whose broth he scattered throughout the sanctuary. Now, Jesus affirms the same sort of thing would occur in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Concerning this “abomination of desolation,” Mark adds the words, “standing where it ought not” (Mk 13:14). That equates with “the sanctuary” of Daniel 8:11-14 and 11:31. Of the Romans invasion of Jerusalem Josephus writes, “And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the building round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its Eastern Gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamations of joy.” Jewish Wars, Book 6, Chapter 6, #316.

The profanation of reference included the holy city, where God had placed His name (1 Kgs 11:36). It is therefore referred to as “The city of God” (Psa 46:4), “the throne of the Lord” (Jer 3:17), and “the city of truth” (Zech 8:3). The Temple itself was “the Temple of the Lord” (2 Kgs 11:10), “the house of God” (1 Chron 29:2), and His “sanctuary” (2 Chron 20:8).

When the Roman ensigns were brought into the Temple, extolling their gods and rulers, it was an especial abomination before the Lord. Unholy things were brought into a holy place, thereby bringing a defilement that mandated destruction.

This was not the immediate application of Daniel’s prophecy, but one of implication and principle – as in Hosea’s reference to God calling His Son out of Egypt (Hos 11:1).

AN APPLICATION

There is a certain abomination related with corrupt religion – when things that God hates are brought into His presence. This is particularly true when it is represented as being religion, associated with sacrifices and worship.

The applicability of this to our day is worthy of notation. For example, God has repudiated the “wisdom of this world,” declaring it to be “foolishness” (1 Cor 3:19). Yet, it has not only been brought into the church, but highly lauded, as though it were in any way acceptable to God. We are regularly confronted with the vaunting of psychological principles, language expertise, hermeneutical principles, human logic, and the likes – all of which come from the well of human wisdom. Such things cannot be dignified by religion, but rather bring a contaminating influence into the sanctuary.

A VIEW TO CONSIDER

I will wax bold and give my assessment of the situation. The very presence of these things is to our day what the compassing of Roman armies was to Jerusalem, and the profanation of the Temple was to those of Antiochus’ day. It is a prelude to Divine judgment. The unusual popularity of such things is evidence that the professed church has been abandoned by God, like Jerusalem was in the days of Antiochus, and the Temple in the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Gentile World

When the Gentile world refused to retain God in its knowledge, He “gave them over to a reprobate mind,” and, as a consequence, all manner of iniquity broke out among them (Rom 1:28-32). It was a veritable flood of immorality and corruption. The dominance of iniquity was itself the evidence God have given them up (Rom 1:24-26).

The Israelites

When Israel would “have none” of God, He “gave them up to their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels” (Psa 81:11). The corrupt manners of the people, therefore, was confirmation that God had delivered them over to the dictates of their corrupted hearts.

The Modern Church

Now, in the professed church, a similar situation has arisen. Division exists on a massive and unprecedented scale, even though Christ is not “divided” (1 Cor 1:13). Iniquity among professed Christians is increasing at remarkable levels. Within the church people are found who are “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim 3:4). Yet, there is nothing about salvation that encourages or contributes to such things – nothing at all! How, then, can we account for their presence? It is simply because the Divine presence has been, at the worst, withdrawn. In the most favorable light, the Holy Spirit has been quenched and grieved, and thus His fruitage is not being found.

The importance of the principle revealed in the phrase “the abomination of desolation,” exists in our time, and we do well to behold it. God’s people must not learn to live with corruption. That includes moral, spiritual, and doctrinal corruption.

All filthiness of both “flesh and spirit” are to be purged from us. In fact, God will not “receive” us unless this takes place, as confirmed in Second Corinthians 6:17-7:1.

CONCLUSION

Thus we have come to the conclusion of the book of Daniel. He was an unusual and faithful man, blessed with a unique and faithful ministry. His tenure was lengthy, yet he never deviated from his faith in, and commitment to, the Lord. Although he was a captive in a foreign land, he never lost his love God’s land, His house, or His people. He was a good and faithful servant, handling the things given to him in such a manner as brought glory to God.

In his youthful days, he was an example for the young. As a young man, he was a premier representative of the years of zeal and ambition associated with beginning manhood. As a mature man, he set the tone for godliness. As an aged man he held the standard high for the Lord. Even though he was a leading politician, he never compromised his faith. When his godly manner of life was threatened, he remained faithful. If he had to choose between lions and the Lord, he chose the Lord. When he did not understand, he sought understanding from the Lord. When he was given a message he declared it, even if it was to a king. When he was told to go his way and wait, he did so.

We do well to follow in the steps of such a noble and choice member of “the household of faith.” He left steps that are worthy of following, and a life worthy of imitation. Daniel is an example of what happens to the person who dares to believe God, and keep on believing.

The Prophecy of Daniel

A SUMMATION OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Lesson # 40

INTRODUCTION

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT DANIEL. All we know about Daniel is found in his book – and that pertains exclusively to his ministry for the Lord. We do not know where or to whom he was born. We know nothing of him prior to his captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, except that he was obviously well taught in the ways and word of the Lord. In Daniel we have an affirmation that nothing really matters except what is done for the Lord.

THE FIRST THING. The very first thing we know about Daniel was that he refused to defile himself with unclean foods (1:8). Although he was young (probably 13-18), and away from his home

land, yet he was acutely conscious of God and his covenant. Such comely qualities are not only for the mature. They belong to those who live by faith, whether young or old.

HE STOOD THE TEST OF TRIAL. Daniel stood the test of severe trial, maintaining his faith during the various tests. He was tested when commanded to eat food his conscience did not condone (1:8). He was tested when faced with death if he could not make known the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (2:16-18). He was tried when an edict went forth forbidding him to pray to God (6:7-27). He passed the test of being in politics (2:48; 5:29; 6:1-3). He remained true to God and prepared when he was in relative obscurity (5:11).

AN EXTENDED MINISTRY. The book of Daniel provides us with a glimpse of an extended ministry for God (1:21). It begins when the prophet is young, and continues until he is aged – a period of well over seventy years. He is a sterling example of a steward being found faithful all the days of his life. This remarkable faithfulness was accomplished prior to the coming of Christ and the glorious benefits of “the day of salvation.”

A LIFE OF UNWAVERING FAITHFULNESS. In his productive life we see uninterrupted faithfulness to God. There were no periods of obtuseness, or times when his love of God and His truth cooled (6:4). His life confirms that spiritual life contains the seed of consistency. Where that consistency is missing, an ungodly intrusion has occurred.

A QUEST TO KNOW. In Daniel there is a continual increase in a fervent quest to know the mind of the Lord. If needful knowledge was not possessed, he sought it (2:18; 12:8). If something was revealed to him, he pursued it (8:15). If he did not understand what God made known to him, he asked about it (12:8).

A CONTINUAL INCREASE IN UNDERSTANDING. Throughout his entire life, Daniel’s understanding continued to increase. Daniel is first made known to us in the context of receiving understanding from God (1:17). The very last thing we know about him, pertains to understanding being given to him, probably the year before he died, when he was close to ninety (10:5-12:13).

A CONSISTENT INTEREST. All of his life, Daniel maintained an intense interest in God’s land, God’s Temple, and God’s people. During over seventy years in a foreign land this interest did not wane. Although he was not in Jerusalem, the city came into his mind. Although he was separated from the Temple, he continually considered its place in the covenant under which he lived. Even his people were in the process of being chastened by God, yet he sought for their restoration (9:15-17).

THE RESPONSE OF FAITH. In Daniel we have a sterling example of the response of faith. When something was revealed to him, he knew it (7:1,7,13; 8:1,2; 10:5; 12:5). When angels appeared to him, he knew it (6:22; 8:16; 9:21). When a messenger from heaven spoke to him, he heard it (8:13,16; 10:9,12; 12:7,8). If an angel touched him, he responded (8:18; 9:21; 10:10,18). If he overheard a

conversation between lofty heavenly personalities, he inquired about the things of which they spoke (12:8).

FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS. Daniel had a heart for God's people as a whole. He also maintained a close and productive fellowship with believers around him. Of particular note is his companionship with Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (1:6), renamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (1:7). Together they overcame the temptation to eat the king's dainty, but unlawful, diet (1:12-15). They were blessed together (1:17), and stood together to be tested by the king (1:19-20). Together they prayed for Daniel to be given an interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's first dream (2:18-19). When Daniel was exalted, he asked that key positions also be given to his three companions (2:49).

A PROPHET DURING A TIME OF CHASTENING. Some of God's prophets have flourished during times of glory and Divine prominence – like Moses. But that has proved to be a rare occurrence. Many prophets spoke for the Lord while Israel was in their home land – like Nathan, Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah. Still others prophesied during a time of recovery – like Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. The entire ministry of Daniel, however, was carried out in a foreign land – most of it while the Babylonian captivity was being experienced. In fact, Daniel ministered throughout most of that captivity. His surroundings were not conducive to a productive ministry, but he faithfully served the Lord anyway. He kept his faith, his fervency, and his hope.

NOT UNUSUAL

The manner of Daniel may appear to be quite unusual – even rare. Yet, that is only because of the insensitivity that exists among professed believers – particularly in our part of the world.

Actually, Daniel's sensitivity is the manner of the Kingdom. This is how a person who is living by faith responds to the Lord. The earnest inquiry into the truth, and a quest for spiritual understanding, are the standards for the people of God. Where these qualities are missing, faith is not present. Religion, in such a case, is only pretense.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD AFFIRMED

The book of Daniel is more about God than it is about Daniel. In fact, were it not for the working of the Lord, we would never have heard about Daniel. Even though he was in the midst of opposition, dwelling in a heathen culture, and away from the holy city and the Temple, yet Daniel frequently spoke of the greatness of God. He received repeated revelations concerning God's Sovereignty.

Although Daniel was faced with several difficult and trying personal circumstances, and a time when his people as a whole appeared to be forsaken by God, yet he never questioned God or expressed

fleshly discontent with his situation. He is a living rebuke to those who become “angry with God,” doubting His loving interest and control when they fall upon hard times. Such attitudes and expressions, so common in our day, are evidences of unbelief. They are indefensible, and are worthy only of rebuke. When the ancients, like Job and Daniel, endured such hardships without registering objections with God, how great such a sin becomes when it is flaunted in the face of the Almighty God in this day of salvation.

CAUSING A PERSON TO BE FAVORED BY ANOTHER

When he was young, the Lord caused Daniel to be especially favored by the Babylonian official who was over him. It would prove to be the means of his protection. “Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs” (Dan 1:9).

CHANGING TIMES AND CONTROLLING RULERS

When Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was revealed to Daniel, he extolled the Lord for His nature and indisputable power. His words are all the more impressive when you consider the spiritually primitive time during which he lived. “Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His: and He changeth the times and the seasons : He removeth kings, and setteth up kings : He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him” (Dan 2:20-22).

A GOD OF GODS AND LORD OF KINGS

Following Daniel’s explanation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great image, the king himself confessed that God was over all rulers, whether idols or kings. “The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods , and a Lord of kings , and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret” (Dan 2:47).

The End of Four Great Kingdoms

It was the government of God that brought an end to the dominance of Babylon, the Medes and Persians, Greece, and Rome (2:44-45).

Alexander the Great Removed

God removed Alexander the Great, the “great horn” of the Grecian empire. When he had served his purpose in the Divine plan, “the great horn was broken” (8:8,22; 11:4), and that “without hand,” or any human intervention (8:25).

Antiochus Epiphanes Removed

When Antiochus Epiphanes had served his purpose, and the time came for the cessation of God's punishment for the sin of His people, this mighty ruler was "broken" by God (11:22).

Roman Little Horn Struck Down

When a despotic and blasphemous "little horn" rose out of the Roman Empire, it "made war with the saints, and prevailed against them" (7:21). But at the appropriate time, and without so much as one second of effective opposition, God wrested the power from him, and "the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom" (7:18,22,25-27).

GOD'S KINGDOM AND DOMINION

In giving Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of his dream, Daniel announced that God's kingdom would, in fact, utterly decimate all other kingdoms. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan 2:44)

In a global proclamation to "all people, nations, and languages," Nebuchadnezzar proclaimed the Sovereignty of the God of heaven. "I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation" (4:2-3).

When Daniel was delivered from the lion's den, Darius made a global proclamation, declaring that God had unrestrained dominion. "He is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth" (6:26-27).

GOD GIVES KINGDOMS TO WHOMEVER HE PLEASES

Even king Nebuchadnezzar was brought to a point where he saw the unfettered power of God. He announced to the world that he now knew God gave kingdoms to whomever He pleased. Men had nothing whatsoever to do with it: "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Dan 4:17). In his proclamation, the king made two more references to this fact – something he learned during his seven-year tutelage in the open field (vs 25,34).

Earlier, when he interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's first dream, Daniel told him, "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory" (2:37).

Daniel reminded Belshazzar that God gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom. “O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor” (5:18).

Daniel told Belshazzar the Lord would divide his kingdom and give it to the Medes and the Persians. (5:28).

GOD DOES WHATEVER HE WANTS

There is a level at which God does whatever He desires. Nebuchadnezzar was also given to see this, and he proclaimed it to the entire world. “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?” (Dan 4:35).

CONCLUSION

The burden of the things revealed to Daniel pertained to what is called the “inter-testamental period” – from Malachi to John the Baptist. Although there was no known prophet during this time, and significant spiritual decline took place among the chosen people, yet God remained “above all and through all” (Eph 4:6). His counsels were executed with unhindered precision. His enemies were removed at the appropriate time. Periods of chastening started and concluded according to the Divine time table. Nothing was out of control.

It is particularly important that believers of our time grasp the truth concerning God’s unquestioned and effective rule. In many ways, our situation is similar to the times of which Daniel prophesied. There is open opposition to the saints, and many are even being overcome.

Still, the Lord Jesus is ruling in the midst of His enemies as it was prophesied (Psa 110:2). The heavens still rule (Dan 4:26). Things are being controlled from heaven, and all times and seasons remain in the power of our Lord! There is every reason to trust God and live in hope.

UNUSUAL DELIVERANCES REVEALED

Some remarkable deliverances are made known in the book of Daniel. They provide a confirmation that it is not vain to serve the Lord, and that He is able to sustain His people in times of great trial and testing.

DELIVERANCE FROM DEFILEMENT

1:3-16. The first deliverance chronicled in this book is most unique – something that can be said of every Divine rescue.

The deliverance took place when Daniel was very young – toward the beginning of captivity in Babylon. Together with his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Daniel was chosen for special training, to “stand in the king’s palace.” For a period of three years they were appointed a diet “of the king’s meat, and of the wine he drank.” He was not only a king, but the ruler of the world, who had just conquered Daniel’s people. Daniel was young, and in captivity.

Yet, Daniel “purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the meat and wine apportioned to him.” The deliverance of Daniel and his friends came through the “prince of the eunuch’s,” whom God moved to be favorably inclined toward Daniel. Daniel proposed a ten day test during which they would eat simple foods. At the conclusion of those days “their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat.” Throughout the remainder of the three years, they were not required to eat the diet formerly imposed upon them by the king. Thus God honored the determination of Daniel, reversing the edict of the ruler of the world.

DELIVERED FROM THE SENTENCE OF DEATH

2:1-18. In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, he was troubled with dreams sent to him by God. When he called the “magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans” of his Empire to identify and interpret his dream, he found they were powerless to do so. Infuriated by their pretension “the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain.” In the process of carrying out that decree, “they sought for Daniel and his fellows to be slain.” Once again, the ruler of the world has made a decree that impacted upon Daniel.

When confronted with the executioner, Daniel “answered with counsel and wisdom,” asking why the decree was so hasty. Evidencing the Lord had softened his heart, the executioner told the circumstances to Daniel. The man of God then asked for time, and joined his companions, asking for mercy from the Lord to know and explain the dream. Their prayers were answered, Daniel explained the dream to Nebuchadnezzar, and was forthwith made “ruler over the province of Babylon.” Thus the very circumstances that required Daniel’s death proved to be an occasion for his exaltation, together with his three friends.

DELIVERED FROM THE FIERY FURNACE

3:1-30. Another unique deliverance occurred when Nebuchadnezzar had an image of gold constructed in the plain of Dura. It was nine stories high (90 feet), and nine feet wide. All people were called together for the announcement of a herald. When the sound of musical instruments began, all

were to fall down and worship the image. At that time, it was reported to the king that certain of the Jews refused to obey the command.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were summoned before the king and given one last change to do what he said. They refused, saying they required no time to think upon the matter. Their God was able to deliver them, and even if He did not, they would not fall down and worship the golden image.

The three were bound hand and foot and thrown into a furnace that had been heated seven times hotter than usual. It was so hot that those throwing them into the furnace were killed. While in the very middle of the furnace, an angel from heaven joined them. All four of them were seen walking about triumphantly in the midst of the fire.

When the men were removed from the furnace, there was no external evidence they had ever been in it. The smell of smoke was not even on their clothes, and not a single hair had been singed. Nebuchadnezzar then confessed the superiority of their God, saying He had “changed the king’s word.” Those who had accused the three were cut in pieces and their houses made a dunghill. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were then promoted in the province of Babylon.

DELIVERED FROM THE LION’S DEN

6:4-28. During the third king under whom Daniel served – Darius the Mede – his favor with the king occasioned great jealousy among the other leaders. The “presidents and princes,” therefore, sought to find an occasion or fault in Daniel. Because none could be found, they concluded the only way to find something against Daniel was to require him by sovereign law to do something against the law of his God. They knew he would violate such a law, and thus become guilty of crime. They moved upon Darius to pass such a law, forbidding any petition or prayer to be made to any one other than Darius for the space of thirty days. The law was passed, and the announcement blazed abroad throughout the kingdom.

Daniel heard about the Law, but totally ignored it, choosing to open his window and pray toward Jerusalem three times a day. The result was that he was found guilty of disobeying the kingly edict, even though it greatly grieved Darius. Consequently, he was thrown into a den of lions.

During the night, an angel was dispatched from heaven. He shut the lion’s mouths, and Daniel was preserved. Early in the morning, the king found him safe, and was “glad for him.” His accusers, together with their families, were thrown into the den of lions. The lions, ravished with hunger, broke them in pieces and consumed them before they hit the ground. Darius then made a global declaration, demanding that all men “tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.” Daniel is then said to have “prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

These latter deliverances are known throughout the world. They are examples of God delivering His people, subduing their enemies, changing the determinations of men, and even exalting His people.

As confirmed in this book, all of these things are involved in deliverance. Deliverance is more than bringing people through the desert. It is also providing nourishment and encouragement for them. It includes thwarting the intention of their enemies, and bringing them into a condition that is better.

The miraculous deliverance and sustenance of Israel was on a group basis. In the book of Daniel, it is on an individualistic basis. That is the Divine manner – to bestow mercy on both the collective and individual level. Scripture confirms God deals with both nations and a single individual (Job 34:29). An example of Divine favor on a nation is found in Israel. His working on the behalf of a person and a few persons is affirmed in the book of Daniel. Considering such marvelous workings brings comfort.

THE PRAYERS IN THIS BOOK

The effectiveness of prayer is seen in this marvelous book. There are a variety of prayers, and each is weighty with benefits. There is a certain focus in the prayers of this book, and the answer to them is equally focused. It is possible to pray in mere generalities, or for things that are difficult to associate with the purposes of God. I realize that it is fashionable to say God is interested in the smallest of our difficulties, and ever detail of our lives. I do not know, however, that such a thought can be established from Scripture. The great prayers of Scripture were not self-centered, but were uttered with the glory of God and fulfillment of His will in mind. The prayers in Daniel provide some excellent examples of this.

PRAYING FOR THE REVELATION OF A SECRET

2:17-19. On this occasion, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego prayed. Their lives were at stake, as Nebuchadnezzar had ordered the death of all the wise men in Babylon. The petition of the three young men was for “mercies” from the God of heaven. Those mercies were not merely to escape the wrath of the king, or for some form of miraculous deliverance. Rather, they prayed that the secret made known in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream would be revealed to Daniel. The “secret” was a sort of Divine blueprint of the history of global empires, and related directly to the day of salvation under the reign of the Lord Jesus. While the prayer was offered in order that “Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men,” their deliverance was not at the heart of the matter. Rather, it was the revelation of the “secret” that was central. The prayer was heard, and the secret was revealed.

THANKSGIVING

2:10-23. In response to the revelation of the “secret” made known in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel offered an insightful prayer of thanksgiving. He was relatively young at the time – probably not yet twenty years of age. Yet his prayer reveals a remarkable level of spiritual understanding.

He acknowledged that both wisdom and might belonged to God. He confessed that God changed times and seasons, and removes and sets up kings. He saw and declared that God gave wisdom to those who were already wise, and knowledge to them with understanding. Daniel's prayer included his confession that deep and secret things were revealed by the Lord, and that light, or illumination, dwelt with Him alone. He knew God had given him to understand what neither Nebuchadnezzar nor any of the wise men of Babylon could comprehend, and he thanked God for it.

The rarity of this level of knowledge within the professing church is itself a commentary on the greatness of Daniel's prayer of thanksgiving. Further, his words were not driven by academic knowledge, but by personal experience.

REGULARITY

6:10-11. We learn something of Daniel's manner of praying in this book. It was not a private manner, although he did not parade it before men. Daniel prayed "three times a day," on his knees, with his windows opened, and facing Jerusalem. It all may have appeared to be a mere lifeless routine to those about him, but it was not. He prayed with a certain consciousness of the holy city, where God had placed His name, and the Temple, with which God had associated Himself. He knew that Solomon had asked God to answer the prayers of those who were captive in another country, yet prayed regularly while considering the Temple (1 Kgs 8:46-50). Thus with regularity and thanksgiving, Daniel prayed daily without fearing man.

FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

9:3-21. Although he was separated from the land of promise and many of his people, Daniel did not forget them. He prayed for their forgiveness, restoration, and welfare. This particular prayer was prompted by Daniel's understanding of the near-conclusion of the Babylonian captivity (9:1-2). In it there is a spiritual order and precision that blesses the soul

- He recognizes that God honors the covenants He makes (9:4).
- He knows there is continued mercy for those who love the Lord and keep hold of His commandments (9:4).
- The sin of God's people is confessed in full recognition of both its nature and greatness. The people sinned, committed iniquity, did wickedly, rebelled, and departed from God's precepts and judgments. They did not hearken to the prophets who spoke to the people and their leaders (9:5-6).
- Righteousness belongs to God, and confusion of face belongs to the transgressing people (9:7a).

- Due retribution belonged to the men of all Judah, Jerusalem, Israel, those who were near, and those who were far off, scattered in foreign countries (9:7b).
- The trespasses of the people were against the Lord Himself (9:7c).
- The people, kings, princes, and fathers sinned against God (9:8).
- Mercies and forgiveness belong to, and come from, God alone. Daniel knew those graces could be obtained, even though the people had rebelled against the Lord (9:9).
- The people had not obeyed the voice of the Lord to walk after His laws, which were set before them by the prophets (9:10).
- A curse had been poured out upon the people because they departed from God, refusing to obey His voice. This was done in strict accord with what Moses declared in the law (9:11).
- In judging Judah, God confirmed the words He spoke against them, and their judges, according to the law of Moses (9:12-13).
- God was righteous in storing up His anger against the people, then bringing evil upon them as He promised He would (9:14).
- Daniel appeals to the Lord's deliverance of the people from Egypt, and the renown He had gained for Himself in doing so (9:15).
- Daniel pleads with the Lord to turn His anger and fury away from the city of Jerusalem (9:16a).
- Jerusalem and God's people had become a reproach to all about them because of their sin (9:16b).
- Daniel asks the Lord to hear his supplications and cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary, for His own name's sake (9:17).
- Daniel asks the Lord to listen to him, look upon their desolations, and look upon the city that is called by His name (9:18a).
- These requests are not presented because of the righteousness of the people, but because of God's great mercies (9:18b).
- Daniel pleads for the Lord to forgive, hearken, and defer not. This he asks the Lord to do for His own sake, and for the city and people who are called by His name (9:19).

This is a most excellent example of ordering ones cause before the Lord, and filling the mouth with arguments (Job 23:4). It is an example of reasoning together with the Lord (Isa 1:18), and pleading with Him (Isa 43:26).

It is good for the people of God to rise above mediocrity and generalities in their prayers. There is a certain fellowship with God that can be experienced in prayer. This is evidenced when matters become very clear to the one making the supplication, and circumstances are seen as they really are.

PRAYING FOR UNDERSTANDING

10:2-3,12. Having sensed the approaching close of the Babylonian captivity, Daniel devoted three full weeks to a quest for understanding. During this time he ate no choice food, and avoided all personal comforts. He called the period a time of “mourning” (10:1). Later, when an angel was dispatched to give an answer to him, we learn that Daniel had actually set his heart to understand and to chasten himself before the Lord (10:12).

The fervency with which Daniel sought understanding is noteworthy. It no doubt accounts for the remarkable and extensive answer that was sent to him from heaven.

It is my persuasion that much of the spiritual ignorance that exists among the professed people of God is directly traceable to their lack of interest in obtaining an understanding. Their prayers and their quests are too abbreviated. Their exposure to the things of God is too brief. They are too casual about comprehending the things of God, and so they remain in a state of spiritual ignorance.

If understanding is to be obtained, it must be earnestly desired, and sought with all diligence. This is necessary because we do not live in a vacuum, but in an intensely active moral realm. There are opposing spiritual forces seeking to hinder the appropriation of “spiritual understanding.” This circumstance mandates a fervent and diligent quest.

GOD DEALS WITH THE HEATHEN

This book contains extensive revelation of how God deals with those who have no formal affiliation with Him. Because God is not in covenant with a people or a person by no means suggests they are not answerable to Him , or that He does not hold them in strict accountability.

Some are of the opinion that God has no dealings with those who are not in covenant with Him. These views are fueled by a misapprehension of the nature of God. For example, some have said that “the Law” was only for Israel, and not for the world. In this view, the Ten Commandments are perceived as binding only upon Israel. However, this is not the case, as the book of Daniel will confirm. As a covenant, the Law of Moses pertained to Israel. But as a definition of sin, it was for the whole world. Thus we read, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God ” (Rom 3:19). All of this is confirmed in the various responses of God to the heathen kings and nations mentioned in Daniel. None of these were in covenant with Him, or had received a law from Him.

- Four global heathen empires were decimated by the Kingdom of God: Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece, and Rome (2:44-45).
- God struck down Nebuchadnezzar when he took credit for building great Babylon (4:30-33).
- Through chastening, God taught heathen Nebuchadnezzar that He alone was God, and did whatsoever He pleased (4:34-35).
- God judged Belshazzar for daring to drink wine from the vessels of God’s house, and not glorifying Him (5:23-28).
- God took away the dominion of the little horn that sprang out of the fourth kingdom, Rome, which I perceive to be papal power (7:25-26).
- God broke the power of the notable Grecian horn, Alexander the Great (8:21-22; 11:4).
- God broke the power of the little horn that sprang out of Greece, Antiochus Epiphanes (8:25; 11:45).
- The Persian Empire was overthrown in the heavenly realms (10:20).

In all of these cases, God governed the heathen with His own people in mind. He used the heathen to chasten His people, and removed them when their work was finished. He never overlooked their pride and insolence against Himself, even though they had neither covenant with, nor law from, Him.

It brings great comfort to consider that Jesus is presently ruling in the midst of His enemies (Psa 110:2). He does not overlook iniquity among those who do not know Him, and with whom He has no covenant. All souls belong to Him, and are held in strict accountability to Him. That is the Divine manner.

THE NATURE OF WORLDLY KINGDOMS

There is an overriding nature to worldly kingdoms, and it is not good. We should know this by the very fact that they are all going to be destroyed by the Kingdom of our God (2:44-45). Daniel was given insights into the nature of the kingdoms of this world.

THEY DETERIORATE IN GLORY

2:33,37-40. In contradiction of the working of the Kingdom of God, the kingdoms of the world tend to deteriorate. With God and His kingdom, the best is last. With the world's kingdoms, the best is first. This is revealed in the dream given to Nebuchadnezzar regarding the four great global empires.

The first was the Babylonian kingdom, depicted by a head of gold. The second was the kingdom of the Medes and the Persians, portrayed by a chest and arms of silver – of lesser value. The third was likened to a belly and thighs of brass – even lesser value. The fourth was pictured was legs of iron and feet of iron and clay mixed – far lesser value.

Thus the kingdoms of the world have more glory in their beginning than in their ending. This is to be contrasted with the Kingdom of our God, which is finally more glorious than it was at its beginning.

THEY TEND TO DIVISION

2:33,37-40. While the Kingdom of God is noted for its unity, the kingdoms of the world are noted for their division. They tend to become more divided and more fragmented. This was also made seen in the successive kingdoms made known in Nebuchadnezzar's first dream.

The Vision of the Image

Babylon was pictured as a single head (2:32a). The Medes and the Persians were divided, and therefore shown as a chest and two arms (2:32b). The Grecian kingdom was also divided, as shown by a belly and thighs (2:32c). The Roman kingdom was also divided, as shown in legs, feet, and toes (2:33).

The Vision of the Four Beasts

The divisions are further brought out in the vision of the four beasts. The first (Babylon) was a majestic lion with harmony of purpose (7:4). The second was a bear raised up on one side, with one part

being dominant over the other (7:5). The third was a leopard with four heads (7:6). The fourth was a ruthless beast with ten horns (7:7).

The Fourth Beast

Division is further accentuated in the extended vision of the fourth beast. First, it had ten horns (7:7). Second, a little horn sprang up among them (7:8a). Third, three of the ten horns were plucked by the roots (7:8b).

The Vision of the Ram and He Goat

The vision of the ram and he goat also declared the tendency to division. First, the ram (the Medes and the Persians) had two horns, with one higher than the other, signifying dominance (8:3). Second, although the he goat had only one horn at first, when it was broken, four sprang up in its place (8:8).

The Demise of the Grecian Empire

In his exposition of the demise of the Grecian Empire, the angel of the Lord emphasized the division of the North (Syria) and the South (Egypt). They were involved in incessant battles and competition with one another (11:6,11,16,40).

A Work of the Flesh

Division is a work of the flesh, as described in the words “hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies” (Gal 5:20). Worldly government is flesh in one of its more refined forms , but it has never been able to consistently avoid these qualities within itself.

THEY STRIVE WITH ONE ANOTHER

Not only do worldly governments tend to division, they also strive with one another, being unable to avoid the competitive spirit. This is also revealed in the book of Daniel.

The Great Image

In the dream of the great image, the hostility of worldly kingdoms was made known. The four kingdoms did not exist simultaneously. Each one was succeeded by another. Babylon was overthrown by the Medes and Persians. The Mede and the Persians were overthrown by the Grecian. The Grecians were supplanted by the Romans (2:39-40).

Vision of the Ram and the He Goat

The ram (Medes and Persians) pushed westward, northward, and southward, ravishing other kingdoms (8:3). The he goat (Grecia) attacked and overcame the ram (8:7).

The Demise of the Grecian Empire

The two Grecian factions of Syria and Egypt continually attacked each other (11:6,11,15,40).

THEY ARE BEASTLY IN NATURE

Worldly kingdoms tend to be ruthless and aggressive, like beasts of the earth. Thus Babylon was depicted as a ravenous lion (7:3). The Medes and Persians were likened to a ruthless bear with three ribs in its mouth, raising up to “devour much flesh” (7:5). Greece was like a swift leopard who rapidly gained dominion over others (7:6). Rome was pictured as a “dreadful and terrible” beast with strong teeth. It devoured, broke in pieces, and stomped and pulverized what was left (7:7).

You will note that the beastly nature increased with each kingdom. That too is the nature of world kingdoms. They tend to become more ruthless.

THEY TEND TO OPPOSE THE SAINTS

Eventually, worldly governments come against the saints of God. This is because, although ordained by God (Rom 13:1-3), the governments of this world tend to compete against God. Rather than serving their God-ordained role of subduing evil and encouraging good, they set their own agenda. It always comes to the point where God’s people are opposed.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

King Nebuchadnezzar, drunk with the power God had given to him, made a large golden image. He required that all of the officials fall down and worship the image which he had set up. The government officials of Babylon saw the faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as a threat to the government and their role in it. They therefore informed the king these three men would not bow down to the statue.

The matter infuriated the king. Ultimately, he had the men thrown into a furnace of fire for not obeying his edict (3:1-28).

Daniel and the Lion’s Den

Intimidated by Daniel’s open and unhindered devotion to God, certain government dignitaries drafted a law that would eventuate, they thought, in the death of Daniel. The law forbade that any

prayer or request be made of anyone other than king Darius for a period of thirty days. The outcome was that Daniel refused to quit praying, and was thus consigned to a den of lions. Although Darius did not want to do this to Daniel, the principle of his government mandated that he do so. The edict was overturned by the Lord (Dan 6:7-27).

The Roman Little Horn

Although the “little horn” of the seventh chapter of Daniel is a religious power, it operated upon the principles of worldly government. Because of this, the saints were viewed as a threat, and were thus opposed. It is said of him, “the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them” (7:21).

The Grecian Little Horn

Antiochus Epiphanes was also noted for his oppression of the people of God. It was said that he would “destroy the mighty and holy people” (8:24). It is twice stated that he came up against “the glorious land” – God’s land (11:16,41). Once it is written that he came “toward the pleasant land” (8:9).

A CONSISTENT PROPENSITY

Throughout history, the propensity of government to oppose the people of God has been confirmed. It has even take place in our own country. Its aggressive suppression of Christian activities, together with its protection of abortion and sodomy, reveal the deadly nature found in the governments of this world. Saints look forward to the time when all opposition will be put down, and the kingdom will be given to the saints of the most high God (8:18,22,27).

THEY ARE MOTIVATED BY SPIRITUAL FORCES

Even though the governments of this world appear influential, and even impregnable, they are actually being manipulated by higher powers. Although the book of Daniel (or any other book) does not comment extensively on this, yet enough it said for us to draw some sound and comforting conclusions.

An angel from heaven accounted for the fall of Persia and the rise of Greece when speaking with Daniel. He traced the influence of both kingdoms to spiritual princes: “the prince of Persia,” and “the prince of Grecia” (10:20). The overthrowing of “the prince of Persia” was accomplished by holy angels. Following that overthrow “the prince of Grecia” rose to prominence. The idea is that Persia was a dominant empire as long as “the prince of Persia” was free to work. Other the other hand, Greece could not rise to prominence under “the prince of Grecia” until “the prince of Persia” was overthrown.

While we must take care not to carry these things further than the boundary of revelation, enough has been made known to confirm that there is more to the governments of this world than meets the eye . The book of Daniel gives us a slice of history in remarkable detail.

We are to understand that this is representative of the nature and background of things that take place in this world – all under God’s control. Nothing is really out of control or can be ultimately effective against us.

CHASTENING DELINEATED

Much is revealed about the chastening of the Lord in this book. We learn that while God is loving and longsuffering, He will not tolerate iniquity in His people. Judgment DOES begin with the house of God, as Peter affirmed. As it is written, “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God : and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Pet 4:17-18). We must, therefore, learn from the perspectives of chastening that are provided in this book.

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY

The bulk of Daniel’s ministry took place during the Babylonian captivity, which itself was a chastening from the Lord. The chastening of the children of Judah was occasioned by their refusal to honor the land sabbaths. The law concerning these sabbaths is stated in the book of Exodus, together with the reason for it. “And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat . In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, and with thy oliveyard” (Exo 23:11). The law was clarified even more in the book of Leviticus. “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD. Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard.” (Lev 25:2-4).

Under the Law, God also moved Moses to speak of what He would do if the people did not honor the land-sabbaths. “Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths . As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths , when ye dwelt upon it” (Lev 26:34-35).

Beginning with king Saul, the people did not honor these sabbaths. This lasted for a period of four hundred and ninety years – a time during which seventy land-sabbaths were not honored. As a result of this, the people of God were chastened. Jeremiah was chosen to inform the people of the chastening, and the reason for it. Here are his words. “And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. . . . For thus saith the

LORD, 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 25:11; 29:10).

Scripture also clarifies that this had to do with the land-sabbaths that were not honored. “To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years” (2 Chron 36:21).

This was the prophecy that confirmed to Daniel that the Babylonian captivity was about to conclude. It was then that he set himself to pray for the Temple, the city of Jerusalem, and the people of God (9:2-3).

A person without spiritual understanding cannot conceive of God chastening in such a severe manner, and for such an extended time, over such an issue. However, that is the Divine manner, and it has been recorded for our learning to assist us in avoiding similar judgments.

THE CHASTENING OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

The Babylonian captivity was a corporate chastening. In Nebuchadnezzar we see one that was personal – directed to a single individual. Habakkuk prophesied of the Babylonian, or Chaldean, captivity (Hab 1:6-10). He emphasized the ferocity with which they would carry out their Divinely appointed mission. He also foretold the punishment of the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. “Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god” (Hab 1:11).

The chastening of which Habakkuk prophesied is chronicled in the book of Daniel. First, Nebuchadnezzar was warned of the impending chastening in a dream. In the dream he saw a flourishing tree that was eventually cut down, then allow to sprout once again. Daniel interpreted the dream to the king. The king was the tree, and had grown fat and prideful because of his own imagined glory. The chastening was spelled out. “ That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will” (Dan 4:25). One year later, the time came when Nebuchadnezzar walked in his palace and reasoned, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?” (Dan 4:30). No sooner had the words dropped from his mouth than a voice came from heaven. “O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will” (Dan 4:32). The same hour the word was fulfilled, and “he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws” (Dan 4:33).

There is no reason to suspect that God does not operate in the same manner today – chastening prideful rulers who do not give Him the glory.

THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

The ruthless rule of Antiochus Epiphanes is associated with the chastening of the Lord. The allusions to this chastening are vague, yet clear enough to understand what was happening.

When we are introduced to this despot, we are told a host was “given to him,” enabling him to do away with the “daily sacrifice,” cast truth down “to the ground,” and practice and prosper without any seeming restraint. However, a brief word is declared which connects this activity with chastening: “by reason of transgression” (8:12). Other versions read, “because of transgression,” NKJV “on account of transgression,” NASB and “because of rebellion.” NIV Another allusion is made to this in the twelfth chapter, where the scattering of the power of the holy people is mentioned (12:6). That is, the chastening would involve the thorough crushing of their pride.

CONCLUSION

The chastening of the Lord is something with which every child of God must be familiar. Solemnly we are told, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is He whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb 12:6-8).

Chastening is not a pleasant experience, nor, indeed, should it be. It is one of the ways the Lord rebukes His wayward children. As it is written, “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him” (Heb 12:5).

The ultimate design behind the Lord’s chastening is that we might “be partakers of His holiness” (Heb 12:10). There are certain things that prohibit our participation in holiness, “without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). Chastening, if received and endured, will have a purging effect upon us. Thus it is said of this experience, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb 12:11).

The severe chastening that was experienced under wicked Antiochus Epiphanes effectively purged from the remnant of God’s people the things that had stubbornly remained among them in spite of very much Divine longsuffering.

THE IMPACT OF REVELATION

There are some indications in Daniel of the impact Divine revelation has upon the individual. Those who are passive and indifferent about the Lord have probably never been knowingly faced with His presence, power, and will.

Some revelations are so weighty they thoroughly disrupt the soul. They speak of judgments that are awesome and extensive, causing the heart to tremble. Such revelations were made known to Daniel, and they had an effect upon him.

The mere exposure of a mortal to a heavenly messenger can be disconcerting. This is not always owing to particular sin found in the one receiving the revelation, but is rather owing to the weakness of the human constitution. In Daniel, we are exposed to the unusual effects of encounters with heavenly beings.

ASTONIED FOR ONE HOUR

When Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a great tree that was cut down, he remembered every detail of the dream. However, he had no understanding of its meaning. Upon calling for Daniel, the king told him that none of the wise men in the kingdom could declare the interpretation of the dream. Yet, he said, “thou art able.” During the period that followed, the Lord made the interpretation known to Daniel. The effect of the experience is noteworthy. Daniel was “was astonied for one hour , and his thoughts troubled him” (4:19). Other versions say he was “astonished,” NKJV “appalled,” NASB “perplexed,” NIV and “severely distressed.” NRSV The word “astonied” can also mean “stunned.”
STRONG’S

The revelation of this dream was like a shock to Daniel’s humanity, sending waves of agitation throughout his soul. It virtually incapacitated him “for one hour.”

Also, his thoughts – the ones revealed to him – “troubled him.” Other versions read “alarmed,” NASB “terrified,” NIV and “aghast at the meaning of the dream.” NLT The meaning of the word “troubled” includes the idea of dismayed, depressed, or horrified.

We learn from the text that it was the nature of the message that so alarmed Daniel. He was told that Nebuchadnezzar was going to be given a beast’s heart for seven years, losing all rationality, and eating grass like an ox, roaming the open fields with beasts. This would come upon the king because of his pride. The king did not know the Lord ruled the kingdoms of men, giving them to whomever He

pleased. Therefore, God would reduce him to a brute beast until he learned that truth.

To Daniel, this was not a mere Bible story. The awareness of such a judgment jarred his intellect and challenged his powers of reason and expression.

There are messages from God which, when taken seriously, disconcert the individual, causing one to tremble at the Word of God. John received such a word when told of the apostate church, and he “marveled with great amazement” NKJV (Rev 17:6). When he was given the book of Divine destiny to eat, it became “bitter” in his belly (Rev 10:9-10).

A messenger came to Ezekiel with a similar word. A book was spread out before him “written within and without” with “lamentations, mourning, and woe.” When he ate the book, he was told to cause his stomach to be “filled with this scroll.” In his mouth it was “as honey for sweetness.” However, it was not sweet in his belly. His spirit became hot, and he remained “astonished” by the river of Chebar “for seven days” (Ezek 2:9-15).

In both cases, with Daniel and Ezekiel, the message was one of woe and judgment. Those messages were of such magnitude with when they were seen they brought great trouble and distress.

I am always concerned when people can speak about a great falling away, the judgment of the wicked, and judgment beginning at the house of God with such passivity and calmness. That posture indicates the message has really not dawned upon them.

ON HIS FACE IN A DEEP SLEEP

On one occasion, the angel Gabriel was commanded to make Daniel “understand the vision” of ram and the he goat, and the various things made known in it. As Gabriel drew near to Daniel, the prophet wrote, “I was afraid, and fell upon my face” (Dan 8:17). The clash of glory with the flesh dissipated his strength and fear gripped his heart. That confirms the vast chasm that has been created by sin between those on earth and those in heaven.

As the angel spoke with Daniel, his natural capacities were simply not able to function in a state of normalcy. Daniel said he remained “in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground” until the angel “touched” him, setting him “upright.” (Dan 8:18).

A similar thing happened when a heavenly messenger appeared to Daniel during the third year of the reign of Cyrus the Persian. Again, as the angel spoke, Daniel reports, “Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face

toward the ground” (Dan 10:9). He remained in that state until the angel “touched” him, setting him on his knees and the palms of his hands (10:10).

NO STRENGTH REMAINED

However robust and strong a person’s body may appear, a single encounter with an angel from heaven can drain all power from one’s physical constitution. Thus Daniel speaks of an angelic encounter in these words. “Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength” (Dan 10:8). This took place at the sight of the angel, and before he began to speak.

Later Daniel confessed he said to the angel, “I have retained no strength,” and “straightway there remained no strength in me” (10:16,17).

BECAME DUMB

An angelic encounter also resulted in the loss of Daniel’s power of speech. It is written, “And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb,” or “speechless” NKJV (Dan 10:15). A single encounter with a single angel who had a single message, and the tongue, which “no man can tame” (James 3:8) lost all abilities of expression.

SORROWS TURNED UPON HIM

The message delivered to Daniel in the tenth chapter of his book brought great sorrow upon him. After the angel enabled Daniel to speak, he said to the angel, “O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me” (Dan 10:16). Other versions read, “my sorrows have overwhelmed me,” NKJV “anguish has come upon me,” NASB and “because of the vision such pains have come upon me.” NRSV

Daniel would be shown visions and interpretations that would speak of the plundering and defilement of the Temple, the cessation of the daily sacrifice and the oppression of the people of God. He could not take such a message casually. His deep love for the Lord, His Temple, His city, and His people caused sorrow to dominate him for a season.

NO BREATH REMAINED IN HIM

In a sense, an encounter with an angel from heaven – even to one greatly beloved of God – was like a strong blow to the pit of one’s stomach. It took Daniel’s breath away. It was a shock to his physical constitution. Of the experience Daniel wrote, “For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me ” (Dan 10:17).

THE LESSON TO BE LEARNED

If such an impact is registered upon the human constitution by the sight and message of a single angel, what can be said of the appearance of the Lord Himself in all of His glory?

Today there is much foolishness taught in the name of the Lord – particularly regarding His second coming. Some conceive of the world fighting with the glorified Christ as Jesus leads His people forth in military conquest. All such talk betrays an abysmal ignorance of both the glory and power of the Lord Jesus.

No person or group of persons ever thought to engage a single angel in combat. The mere look of the Lord “through the pillar of fire and of the cloud,” “troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels.” The Egyptians did not decide to fight the Lord, or to resist Him. Instead they cried out, “Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians” (Ex 14:24-25).

And what will happen when the Lord descends from heaven with a mighty shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God? What of when He comes in all of His own glory, the Father’s glory, and the glory of all of the holy angels (Lk 9:26)? What power will remain in flesh at that time? Who will dare to hurl aspersions at the Lord’s Christ at that time? Who will take up stones to stone Him then, as they did when He walked among men? (John 10:31)?

THE THRONE ROOM

There are precious few glimpses of the throne room of God in Scripture.

ISAIAH

Isaiah was given a view of the heavenly chambers. “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke” (Isa 6:1-4).

MICAIAH

Micaiah the prophet was also given a glimpse of the throne. “I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left” (1 Kgs 22:19).

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel saw “visions of God,” in which a heavenly throne was seen. “And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake” (Ezek 1:28).

ZECHARIAH

Zechariah was given to see the throne room of God. “And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair miter upon his head. So they set a fair miter upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by” (Zech 3:1-5).

JOHN THE BELOVED

John the beloved also had a vision of the throne. “And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind” (Rev 4:2-6).

DANIEL

Now, Daniel is added to this illustrious number – people given to behold the very throne room of Almighty God. This is the place from which the affairs of this world are governed. It is the domain from which kings are thrown down and raised up. Times and seasons are determined in this sacred place.

After being introduced to the ruthless kingdoms of this world, and a “little horn” that would wreak havoc among men, Daniel was shown the throne of God. “I beheld till the thrones were cast down,

and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him” (Dan 7:10).

Who is able to stand before this throne, or to resist the judgments that issue forth from it? The answer is obvious – no one! All power and authority issue forth from this throne. The majestic powers that surround it, ministering to the Lord enthroned there, are all superior to anyone upon the earth or under the earth. Edicts issued from this throne cannot be thwarted or countermanded.

The One upon this throne does whatever He wills among the armies of heaven and the inhabitants of earth, and none can restrain Him.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

The prophet Daniel was also granted to see some of the involvements of the day of judgment. While the amount of information given to him was not significant, the weight of it was unmistakably large. “A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened ” (Dan 7:10).

A PUBLIC JUDGMENT

“ . . . thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.” We learn from this that the judgment will be a public affair, with a surrounding host of ministering spirits. These are the angels before whom Jesus will confess those who have confessed Him before men (Luke 12:8). Those who have denied Him will also be denied before this ministering host (Luke 12:9). Here, before this vast host, God will be “justified in all of His sayings” (Rom 3:4).

THE JUDGMENT IS SET

“The judgment was set.” There is an appointed time when the heavenly court will convene, and the judgment will begin. Paul spoke of it in this manner: “He hath appointed a day , in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). There is no way to avoid this day, or for it to be postponed. The time will come when the day of judgment will commence, and everyone will be there.

EVERYTHING WILL BE KNOWN

“ . . . and the books were opened.” The “books” will be “opened” – something that was also revealed to John the beloved. “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books , according to their works” (Rev 20:12).

These are the record of the thoughts, words, and deeds of mankind. There will be “nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was any thing kept secret, but that it should come abroad” (Mark 4:22). The books will be “opened.”

Things that were “hidden” upon the earth will be brought to light by God, and even the “counsels of the heart” will be made known (1 Cor 4:5). All of that, and more, is involved in the books being “opened.”

THE SAINTS TAKE THE KINGDOM

Prior to Christ, very little was known of the saints receiving the Kingdom.

AT CREATION

Although God created man “to have dominion, ” the revelation of the scope of that dominion was extremely limited. “And God said, Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth . So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth ” (Gen 1:26-28).

THE PSALMS

The Psalmist said, “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas ” (Psa 8:8).

TO NOAH

After the earth was cleansed in the flood, and only eight people were found upon it, God spoke to Noah. "And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea; into your hand are they delivered . Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things " (Gen 9:3).

HEBREWS

The Holy Spirit has revealed to those in Christ that although man was made to have dominion, he does not yet possess it. With the entrance of sin into the world, mankind realized a loss of dominion. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands : Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet . For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him " (Heb 2:7-8).

In other words, the extent of the dominion for which God created man was much more than it appeared to be. "All things" goes beyond beasts, fowl, and fish. Yet, prior to Christ, little this dominion was revealed.

DANIEL

In this matter, Daniel was given to see much more than was previously known. God did not show Daniel a vision of the animal kingdom being ruled by men – although that will surely take place when creation is liberated from the bondage of corruption (Rom 8:21).

After being shown a vision of global kingdoms and their exploits, the Lord revealed to Daniel that the entirety of the kingdom of God was going to be given to the saints. . He was told this was a Divine appointment, and it was sure to come.

THE SAINTS WILL TAKE THE KINGDOM. "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom , and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (Dan 7:18).

THE TIME WILL COME. "Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (Dan 7:22).

THE KINGDOM IN ALL OF ITS GREATNESS WILL BE GIVEN TO THE SAINTS. "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (Dan 7:27). The New Revised Standard Version provides an interesting reading of this text. "The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High; their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey THEM ."

No other person prior to Christ received such a clear view of the ultimate reign of the saints of God. After Jesus was exalted, we were told about reigning with Christ (2 Tim 2:12), judging the world (1 Cor 6:2), judging angels (1 Cor 6:3). How singularly marvelous it is that Daniel was given to see the glorious reign of the saints in such vivid detail!

THE COMING OF MESSIAH

Within the context of jostling empires, and the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms, Daniel was given to see the coming of the Messiah, and His exaltation as well.

THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

With astounding precision, Daniel was told of the coming of the Messiah. This included pinpointing when He would begin His ministry, and when He would die for the sins of the people. The beginning of His Messianic ministry at His baptism would occur four hundred and thirty-four years after the restoration of Jerusalem began under Ezra (27 A.D.). Thus it is written, “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks (434 years): the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.” (Dan 9:25).

THE DEATH OF THE MESSIAH

The time of the death of the Messiah was also revealed. It would be in the midst of the seventieth week, or three and one-half years after His ministry began. “And after threescore and two weeks (after the city was built) shall Messiah be cut off” (Dan 9:26). The precise time is said to be “in the midst of the week,” which was the seventieth week, or around A.D. 30.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MESSIAH'S DEATH

Prior to Christ, there were very few revelations about what would be accomplished by the death of Christ. In Eden it was presented as Satan bruising Christ's heel, and a time when He would bruise the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). In the Psalms it was seen as a time when He was forsaken by God (Psa 22:1), and a time when He was oppressed by men (Psa 22:13-18; 69:21,26; 109:25). Isaiah spoke of His death as the time when His appearance was marred more than any of the sons of men (Isa 52:14). Isaiah also was given to see the substitutionary aspect of Christ's death (Isa 53:5-6,8,10-12). Zechariah declared He would die by the hand of His friends (Zech 13:6). What marvelous things will Daniel see?

Ponder what was revealed to Daniel concerning the accomplishments of Christ's death. ". . . to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy" (Dan 9:24)

Finish the Transgression

That is, as a result of the coming Messiah, the tendency to transgress would, in Him, be brought to an end. There would be a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), in which men have their stony heart removed, and a new and pliable heart of flesh be given to them (Ezek 11:19; 36:26). By putting His laws "into their minds" and writing them "in their hearts" (Heb 8:10), God would transform the people, causing them to walk in His statutes (Ezek 36:27). Those in covenant with God through the Christ would no longer be noted for sinning.

Make An End of Sin

Here the idea is that of bringing an end to the reign of sin. It would be toppled from the throne so that men would no longer be enslaved by it, being "servants of sin" and "free from righteousness" (Rom 6:17,20).

This is a prophetic declaration of the taking away of the sins of the world (John 1:29). The scape-goat of heaven would bear them into an uninhabitable land, where they would be remembered "no more" (Lev 16:10-22; Heb 8:12).

Make Reconciliation for Iniquity

This declares the means by which sin would be done away, expiated, or removed from Divine consideration. Apostolic doctrine elaborates on this marvelous accomplishment. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin . . ." (2 Cor 5:21). And again, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal 3:13). And again, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet 2:24).

From another perspective, this was God Himself laying upon Christ "the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6). It was Jesus suffering for our sins, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet 3:18). It was God in Christ Jesus "reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor 5:18-20).

Bring In Everlasting Righteousness

If ever men were going to become righteous, righteousness would have to be brought in . At the

time of Daniel, sin had reigned uncontested for around 3,500 years. It had prevailed to such an extent that the Divine assessment was, “there is none righteous, no not one” (Rom 3:10). Men have to be “made righteous.”

Because Jesus effectively took away the sins of the world, God is now the “Justifier” of those who believe on His Son – and He is “Just” in doing so (Rom 3:26). Now, having put the believer in Christ Jesus, God makes Jesus to be “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30). From another perspective, He imputes His own righteousness to those believing on His Son. As it is written, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works” (Rom 4:6).

Seal Up the Vision

This sealing does not refer to a concealment of the prophecy, but to its predetermined fulfillment. What has been made known about the coming Messiah is so sure the prophecy and vision can be stamped with a seal just as though it had already been fulfilled. There is no possibility that it would not happen – that the Messiah would not come in the fulness of the time, bringing newness of heart and spirit, taking away the sins of the world, satisfying the righteous demands of God, and bringing everlasting righteousness within the reach of fallen humanity.

Anoint the Most Holy

The vision and the prophecy related to men having access to God through an effective Mediator. In covenantal words, “And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest” (Heb 8:11). This is nothing less than entrance into the Most Holy place – the holy of holies. Our bold access to the throne of grace is involved in this. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

This refers to “the new and living way, which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb 10:20). By anointing the holy place, Jesus has cleansed or sanctified it for our entrance. Now the sons of God may traffic in the place formerly forbidden to them. It has been sprinkled with His blood, purifying “heavenly things” for the use of the redeemed of the Lord (Heb 9:23).

Conclusion

Today, more than 2,500 years after Daniel’s prophecy, the things revealed to Him about Christ remain obscured to great numbers of professing believers. It is improper for any person in this day of salvation to see less of the Messiah than was seen by Daniel. This is the day of the unsealed truth of the Gospel, which is to be known.

THE EXALTATION OF MESSIAH

The exaltation of Christ was not seen with clarity prior to His ascension. Some few references were made to it, but they were not attended with any measurable degree of clarity. The second Psalm refers to Christ's enthronement and the necessity of yielding to Him (Psa 2:8-12). The twenty-fourth Psalm alludes to His ascension as Him returning from a great victory (Psa 24:7-10). The sixty-eighth Psalm speaks of Him ascending on high and receiving gifts for men (Psa 68:18). Isaiah prophesied, "a king shall reign in righteousness" (Isa 32:1).

Ponder what was revealed to Daniel concerning the exaltation of Christ.

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

Son of Man

In all of the Scriptures prior to Christ, Daniel is the only book in which the Messiah is referred to as "The Son of Man." That term is used eighty-six in the Scriptures after Christ, but only once before His appearance in the world. Eighty-three of these are found in the Gospels, when Jesus Himself was speaking. One is found in the book of Acts (Acts 7:56). Two are found in the book of the Revelation (1:13; 14:14).

The term "Son of Man" refers to the Christ in His redemptive capacity . This does not refer to Jesus merely as the premier Man, but as the One chosen to redeem man. It is most remarkable that Daniel was given to see Him in this capacity. It would be as the glorified "Man" that He would be exalted.

He Came With the Clouds

". . . came with the clouds of heaven . . ." Other versions read , "coming with the clouds of heaven," NKJV and "with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of man was coming. NASB

Those familiar with Scripture will recall the Lord's use of these very words when referring to His return to earth. "they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great

glory” (Mat 24:30; Mk 13:26). “Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven ” (Mat 26:64; Mk 14:62). In these texts, Jesus is referring to His second coming, when He returns to be seen by “every eye” (Rev 1:7).

This text, however, refers to Him coming to “the Ancient of days,” or “God the Father,” as Jesus called Him (John 6:27). This has reference to His ascension into heaven when “a cloud received Him out of their (the disciples) sight,” and into the presence of the Father (Acts 1:9).

They Brought Him Near to Him

“ . . . and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him.” This has to do with Christ’s entrance into heaven and reception by the Father. This is the point at which the Father “highly exalted” the Son, giving Him a “name that is above every name” (Phil 2:9). In order for men to be received by God, He must first receive the Son and what He did in the behalf of men.

The entrance of the risen Savior into heaven is a key point of Apostolic doctrine. Here, as well as some other places, it is seen in prophecy, which, by its very nature, is not as specific as the declaration of the fulfillment of the prophecy. The fulfillment of the prophetic word is what Peter referred to as “a more sure word of prophecy,” KJV or “the prophetic word confirmed” NKJV (2 Pet 1:19). It is to our advantage to acquaint ourselves with the ascension of Jesus. Once again, this is the point at which He “came” “with the clouds of heaven,” and “unto the Ancient of Days.”

He Was Given Dominion

“And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom. . .” This equates to Jesus receiving all power in heaven and in earth (Matt 28:18). It was what Jesus referred to when He said, “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me” (Luke 22:29).

Daniel was given to see what Paul would powerfully declare as accomplished many years later. “He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church” (Eph 1:20-22).

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The resurrection of all the dead was introduced by the prophets, but without extensive elaboration. Job spoke of it, but with little clarity (Job 14:12-15; 19:25-27). David was given to see something of the resurrection (Psa 16:9-10; 17:15; 49:15). Isaiah was given to see the resurrection as the dissolution of death (Isa 25:8), when the earth would “cast out the dead” (Isa 26:19). Hosea spoke of God ransoming people from the power of the grave (Hos 13:14). Aside from these, few references were made to what we call the general resurrection.

Ponder what was made known to Daniel about the resurrection. In his case, the point was not the resurrection itself, but events that would occur at that time.

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Dan 12:2-3).

SLEEPING AND WAKING

Those who “sleep in the dust of the earth” are the bodies. They are said to “sleep” in view of their imminent resurrection. When the earth passes away, the bodies that are asleep there will awaken by the word of Christ (John 5:28). Thus, the grave is seen as a temporal abode, and what is placed in it will come forth from it.

SOME TO EVERLASTING LIFE

Just as surely as there is a distinction among men, that distinction will be made known in the resurrection. Some who are raised will enter into “everlasting life,” with not a single aspect of death remaining in or around them.

All of this is made more plain in Jesus. But it was not so plain in Daniel’s day. In every translation of Scripture, this is the only Old Covenant writing in which the words “everlasting life” occur. While no other prophet spoke of the resurrection in this way, Jesus did (Matt 25:46; John 5:28-29). It is, therefore, noteworthy that such wonderful knowledge was vouchsafed to Daniel.

SOME TO SHAME AND EVERLASTING CONTEMPT

The wicked will also be raised from the dead, and their future is dreadful. “Shame” speaks of disgrace, reproach, and rebuke. The unrighteous will be faced with an eternity in which shame will never be lifted, and reproach will never cease. There will be a lively sense of total rejection that is ever growing and intensifying within them.

“Everlasting contempt” speaks of being repulsive, abhorred, and detestable. In this world, there

are some facets of even wicked people that do not appear detestable. Often there are commendable traits found in people who are themselves wicked and cut off from God. But it will not be so when they are raised from the dead. Even though they may have been honored and revered in this world, in the world to come they will be held in utter contempt which will never cease, but only increase.

THEY WILL SHINE

The righteous will gain many advantages in the resurrection. Although they were subjected to shame in this world, and often counted as “the filth of the world” and “the offscouring of all things,” it will not be so when they are raised from the dead. Then, within the environment of the new heavens and the new earth, and in the presence of God, the Lamb, and the holy angels, they will collectively shine as the brightness of the firmament, and individually as the stars forever and ever. That is a remarkable revelation to be given prior to the enthronement of Jesus.

A SPECIFIC PLACE RESERVED

“But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days” (12:13). Daniel was comforted with a promise of what he would experience after the resurrection. Soon his life on earth would end, and he would “go the way of all the earth” (1 Kgs 2:2). But in the end, he would stand in his appointed place, and occupy the domain for which he was prepared in this world. Once again, this is a out-of-the-ordinary insight for the times of Daniel. He received it because he was “greatly beloved.” (9:23; 10:11,19).

WHEN PROPHECIES ARE REVEALED

One of the key things I personally gleaned from this book is when prophecies can be properly understood. A special point is made of this in the twelfth chapter. Daniel was told to seal up what was shown to him until “the time of the end.” The texts read as follows. “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end” (Dan 12:4), and “Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end ” (Dan 12:9).

THE TIME OF THE END

The “time of the end” is the time during which the things that are written will begin to be fulfilled . At that time, they will be opened, and will become more apparent. When the things the angel has made known begin to happen, then the truth of them can be more clearly seen.

The things that were revealed to Daniel were not intended to be used to formulate an official

religious position. They are not mere intellectual dainties, or theological fads to be traded back and forth among religious specialists. They were to be recorded precisely as they were given. Then, when they came to pass, they would be unfolded to the elect, yielding edification and comfort.

In this way, the Word of God is seen as “seed” (Luke 8:11). When it finds lodging in an “honest and good heart,” the time has come for it to be unfolded. All times before that were “even to the time of the end.”

The Manner of the Kingdom

This is a kingdom manner, or a way in which God deals with humanity. When what God has declared occurs in human experience, then light is shed upon it, and the book is unsealed. At that time, those who are involved in the experience receive the understanding they did not have before.

Peter on Pentecost

A most excellent example of this facet of the kingdom is seen on the day of Pentecost. At that time God began to fulfill many things that were formerly like Daniel’s prophecy – shut up and sealed. The words of these prophecies were known, but their meaning remained veiled.

When the Holy Spirit was “shed forth” by the Lord Jesus, and prophesied events began to take place, Peter at once saw more in certain texts than he had ever seen before. He saw the truth of Joel’s prophecy (Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32). He saw the truth of David’s words (Acts 2:25-28; Psa 16:8-11). He saw the truth of God’s promise to David concerning One who would sit on his throne (Acts 2:30-30-33; 2 Sam 7:11-16; 1 Chron 17:11-15). He saw the truth of David’s Psalmic prophesy (Acts 2:34-36; Psa 110:1-3).

The time of those prophecies had come, and thus they were opened to the hearts of the faithful.

Until the Day Dawn

This principle is also seen in Peter’s word concerning the “more sure word of prophecy” that those in Christ possess. A “more sure word” is one that has already been fulfilled, as compared with one that is yet to be fulfilled. Of this “More sure word” Peter writes, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet 1:19).

This “more sure word” relates to the accomplishments of the Lord Jesus as contained in the Gospel. He has already put away sin (Heb 9:25), reconciled the world to God (2 Cor 5:18-20), destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14), plundered principalities and powers (Col 2:15), and is “the end of the law for

righteousness” (Rom 10:4). He has already made peace with God through the “blood of His cross” (Col 1:20), and is ever living “to make intercession for us” (Heb 7:25).

These things being true, this is the time when they can be understood – when the book can be unsealed, so to speak. Therefore, as we diligently give heed to them, making them a priority in our thoughts and meditations, they will be opened to us. What a marvelous truth!

A Common Experience

When you experience what God has said, it opens to your understanding. In this sense, you know no more of God’s Word than you have actually experienced. A person whose heart has actually been circumcised is able to arrive at an understanding of “the circumcision of Christ” (Col 2:11). For all others, the matter is “shut up” and “sealed.” The best they can do is philosophize about it, and philosophy has no moral or spiritual power .

When the Lord has “opened” your heart, the Scripture that declares He opened Lydia’s heart comes alive to you (Acts 16:14). Until that time, such expressions are “shut up” and “sealed.”

CONCLUSION

Thus we come to the conclusion of this marvelous book. In it we have seen the God of heaven revealed and extolled in order that we might trust in Him and live by every word proceeding out of His mouth. If the times in which we are living are difficult, let us resort to the book of Daniel for comfort and consolation. If we are faced with a difficult environment in which to minister, consider the circumstances under which Daniel ministered. If we are called to pass through hard trials, ponder the furnace of fire and the den of lions, and expect to be delivered. If your peers malign you and seek your hurt, think of those who conspired against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and against Daniel as well. If you are young, by faith look forward to protection like the four children of Judah. If you are old, expect to be given something special from God. If you do not understand, seek understanding, and be willing to wait like Daniel. If you are concerned for the people of God, pray for them like Daniel did. If you have message to deliver that is difficult, declare it like Daniel. If you have to give bad news, be heart-broken about it like Daniel was. If you see something wonderful in God’s word, linger longer, and you will see some more, like Daniel did. You can learn much from this man of God.