

*the prophecies of*  
**DANIEL**



*Allan A. MacRae ph.D.*

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The Prophecies of Daniel  
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## FOREWORD

Dr Allan A MacRae was Professor of Old Testament and Church History when I studied at Faith Seminary both for my M.Div. degree in the forties and S.T.M. in the fifties. From him I had learned the principles of Hebrew Exegesis and of Prophecy, which logically led us into the precious Pre-millennial position. One of the courses on Prophecy I took under him was Daniel.

In reading over this book all that I had imbibed from my teacher has come back vividly to mind. It is like taking a refresher course, a revision of those principles that have guided me without fail to this day.

"Since numerous books have been written about Daniel's prophecies it may well be asked why another should appear," says Dr MacRae in his introduction to this book. He continues, "Some of these books are excellent in one way and some in another, but there is a gap which needs to be filled, and which, if filled, can be helpful to all prophetic study." "The gap which needs to be filled," I am persuaded, is now being filled by the author.

In this book you will find conclusions held by other writers in the traditional way re-examined. By examining them critically, it is like entering into a debate with their proponents. I have found that debates are an effective means to bring out the truth. This was what the apostles and elders did at the Council of Jerusalem in the trials and testings of the Early Church. As you read this book you are entering into that debate.

While Dr MacRae endeavours to express himself "in language that can be understood by any educated layman," this treatise is especially valuable to his past students, and to all students of prophecy, the more as we see the Day approaching. In these darkening days of the end-times, the Prophecy of Daniel is a light to show us the Way through. Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.

Timothy Tow  
Far Eastern Bible College  
Singapore  
August, 1991



# **Part I**

## ***General Considerations***

## **PURPOSE AND METHOD OF THE BOOK**

Since numerous books have been written about Daniel's prophecies it may well be asked why another should appear. Some of these books are excellent in one way and some in another, but there is a gap which needs to be filled, and which, if filled, can be helpful to all prophetic study.

Many discussions approach the book of Daniel with a rather complete theory of God's plan for the future, and endeavor to fit each of its prophecies into a predetermined viewpoint. The differing eschatological systems of the writers affect their interpretation at many points. The present writer has profited from insights found in these various books. Yet his present purpose is quite different.

That purpose is to concentrate on the exact phrases of Daniel's prophecies, trying to see how much or how little can properly be drawn from each of them while keeping references to other parts of Scripture to a minimum. We shall aim to see what can be determined with certainty about the meaning of each statement, to indicate the degree of support that various interpretations can claim, and to note points at which the careful student should reserve judgment. We shall utilize all the available linguistic, historical and archaeological material, and shall try to deal fully and carefully with each problem, but we shall endeavor to express the results of our investigation in language that can be understood by any educated layman.

It is all too easy to infer a conclusion from a passage of Scripture and then read this interpretation into another

passage or force other passages into line with it. The present writer is very conscious of this danger and feels that there can be value in a fresh look at Daniel's prophecies, paying particular attention to those that have already been fulfilled.

It is not the purpose of this book to relate the prophecies of Daniel to other parts of the Scripture and thus to try to produce a detailed picture of God's future activities. This is a desirable goal and many attempts have been made to fulfill it; yet it is the feeling of the present writer that it is a second stage which can be performed much more satisfactorily if it is preceded by the type of investigation undertaken here.

The twelve chapters in Daniel's book contain a larger number of specific future predictions than any other Bible passage of equal length. They include a great deal of detail about the history of the four hundred years following the time of Nebuchadnezzar and also deal with later events. In some parts of the book the detailed predictions are so numerous and so precise that all "liberal" scholars insist that they cannot have been written until after their alleged fulfillment. Some of these prophecies are so unique that very special study is required to interpret them properly.

The first half of the book, with its thrilling accounts of how God protected His faithful servants contains incidents that are well known to most Christians. The second half, which principally consists of the visions God gave to Daniel, is far less known.

Most Christians are familiar with Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter 2 and the interpretation that Daniel gave it, pointing to four great human empires that would precede the establishment of God's universal kingdom. A smaller number are familiar with the parallel picture in Daniel 7 of four beasts coming out of the sea. Comparatively few Christians know much about the great prophecies contained in the last six chapters of the book. Yet these chapters are of great interest, not only for their prediction of events that are still future, but perhaps even more for the many predictions that have already been fulfilled. When these are

carefully studied and compared with the related historical events, principles are discovered that are fundamental to the understanding of all Bible prophecy.

### **The Maccabean View**

Practically all interpreters of the book of Daniel agree that much of chapters 8 and 11 is closely related to events that occurred in the first half of the second century B.C. when the Syrian Hellenistic king, Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes, instituted a severe persecution of all who professed belief in Judaism or continued to perform its ceremonies.

Those who resisted this persecution and eventually succeeded in gaining their freedom from the Syrian oppressors were led by a group of men called the Maccabees. The apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees describes these events.<sup>^1</sup>

A number of commentaries on the book of Daniel have been written by men who claim that the whole book (and not just ch. 8 and part of ch. 11) was written in order to encourage believers who were suffering under Antiochus' persecution, and that the book did not originate at the time of Nebuchadnezzar but during the reign of Antiochus. They hold that at that time someone wrote a book which he represented as the work of a man who had lived at the court of Nebuchadnezzar four centuries earlier. This book would tell of imaginary incidents when God was supposed to have protected his faithful people and would represent its hero as having predicted the oppression under Antiochus, and as having declared that it would be followed by a supernatural deliverance that would introduce a time of peace and happiness.

Evangelical interpreters agree that much of Daniel 8 and 11 predicts this great crisis, but believe that the book was written at the time of Nebuchadnezzar and that God gave it to his people to prepare them, not only for the crisis brought on by Antiochus but also for many other events and situations.

The view that the book was not written until the time of the Maccabees was advanced as early as the third century

A.D. by an anti-Christian writer named Porphyry,<sup>2</sup> who declared that its alleged predictions of events prior to that time were based on the unknown writer's knowledge of past history, though presented as if predicted far in advance, and that its alleged predictions of later events were merely the guesses and hopes of its author.

This view was largely dormant during the Middle Ages, but in recent centuries it has been revived and is now generally held by critical scholars.

The present writer believes that Jesus Christ is the Lord of all things and that whatever He says is to be considered as true. Since Christ set the seal of His authority on the books of the Old Testament, one would expect His followers to believe its statements about Daniel having received visions while at the court of Nebuchadnezzar and to consider these visions as authentic revelations from God.

Since the present work intends to deal primarily with interpretation rather than criticism, it aims not so much to prove the authenticity of the book of Daniel as to determine its meaning. Therefore arguments for or against the critical theory of Porphyry will have little place in this book.<sup>3</sup> Yet some knowledge of the history of the time of Antiochus is an absolute necessity for interpreting Daniel 8 and 11. Pertinent details of this history will be examined in connection with our study of those chapters.

A number of brilliant scholars have devoted a great deal of time to the study of the words and phrases of the book of Daniel, and some of them have tried to interpret the entire book from the viewpoint that it was written at the time of the Maccabees. These interpretations will be carefully examined wherever they directly affect the meaning of any word or phrase in Daniel's prophecies.

When we discuss such interpretations we shall speak of the view that the book was written at the time of the Maccabees as the Maccabean view. The view that it was actually written in the time of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors we shall call the evangelical view. This must not be taken as necessarily characterizing everyone who holds to the Maccabean theory as not being evangelical, for there

are some who accept the teachings of the New Testament on other points as true and yet hold the Maccabean view of the origin and meaning of the book of Daniel. We shall simply use these terms as a convenient means of referring to the two approaches, since there are many points, not only in chapters 8 and 11 but in other chapters as well, where the interpretations of those holding the two view points differ greatly. Our purpose includes careful examination of these differing interpretations, as we seek to find the true meaning of each verse in the prophecies.

*It should be kept in mind that this is not a verse by verse commentary.* We are interested in pointing out the development of thought and the interrelation of material. Individual verses are discussed at length when they are especially important in relation to the passage as a whole.

The next three chapters will deal with matters that need consideration before beginning the study of the individual prophecies in the book of Daniel. Chapter 5 will discuss the briefer predictions. Then we shall examine the longer prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9 and 11-12 in the order of their occurrence.

### Notes

- ^1 Maccabees is considered a dependable source for the history of the times of the Maccabees, but 2 Maccabees, the latter part of which parallels the earlier part of 1 Maccabees, contains much that is considered unhistorical.
- ^2 Porphyry's book has been lost, but Jerome's commentary on Daniel, written about A. D. 400, frequently refers to it and thus enables us to know quite definitely what he said.
- ^3 For discussion of some of the key points of the argument for the Maccabean view see p. 59.



# √A Few Special Needs for the Study of Daniel's Prophecies

## 1. Knowledge of Ancient History

Before one can hope properly to interpret Daniel's predictions about events that are still future he should carefully study those already fulfilled, and thus increase his understanding of the relation between prophecy and fulfillment.

Much of Daniel's prophecy deals with events that occurred in ancient times. Our present generation is woefully ignorant of ancient history. Even students who take courses in the subject may find that their attention is primarily focused on the classical period of Greece and Rome, and that the areas and times with which the greater part of Daniel's prophecy deals are largely neglected.

Daniel gives more extensive and remarkable predictions of events in secular history than any other prophet. The present writer has made full investigation of most of the extant material dealing with these periods of history, and, as a result, has been shocked by the gross ignorance regarding clearly established facts of ancient and medieval history that is sometimes found in commentaries on the book of Daniel.

If a student is properly to understand Daniel's prophecies about the great empires of antiquity it is important that he have in mind the nature of empire and some of the history involved. Therefore it will be necessary at this point briefly to survey the origin of human government and the principal facts in the history of the great empires involved in Daniel's prophecies. Though the information is well attested, much of it is not widely known today.



if all men followed God's commandments and showed true love to one another there might be no need of government except to handle those matters that require some system for coordinating the activities of individuals, as, for instance, making traffic laws. But ever since Adam sinned human beings have been selfish and violence has tended to occur. As a result there has been a tendency, in every group of people, for individuals to acquire positions of dominance. In the course of time these groups have tended to come into conflict with one another, and thus larger groups have been formed, speaking the same language and having the same general culture. These combinations have rarely come about as a result of voluntary union, but generally because a stronger group has conquered those that were weaker. Thus nations came into existence in ancient times, composed of people with similar language and culture, and usually controlled by an individual whom we today would call a king, though various names for this position have been used from time to time. A number of such national groups were formed before the beginning of written history, and others have come into existence since that time.

In present-day language such nations are not designated as empires, for this word has now come to be used for the control that a nation may exercise over groups that differ from it in language or in culture. When the book of Daniel speaks of great kingdoms it usually is referring to what would today be called empires.

The Egyptians were organized into one large kingdom at a fairly early period. Thereafter, from time to time, they conquered a few areas with people of other languages and cultures. However, this Egyptian empire varied in extent and was not really an empire for any long period. The same is true of the ancient Hittite empire.

The first empire that brought a large number of foreign peoples under its sway and continued to hold them in subjection for several centuries was that of the Assyrians, whose culture had largely been developed by the previous Sumerians or by the former hegemony that centered in Babylon. The Assyrians carried on campaigns year after

year, conquering peoples that had quite different languages and culture, some of whom had been separated from them by hundreds of miles. Within the Assyrian empire any individual or group was fairly safe from molestation, provided he submitted to the central authority, though there was always the danger that an individual might be drafted into the Assyrian army to fight for additional conquests.

The Assyrian kings introduced principles of "frightfulness" in controlling the people they conquered, punishing with terrible cruelty any group that revolted and often moving large groups of conquered people from one area to another. Among their conquests were the Syrian (or, more accurately, Aramean) kingdom, with its capital at Damascus, and the northern Israelite kingdom, with its capital at Samaria.

Although Babylon was never happy under Assyrian domination, its language and culture were fundamentally the same as those of its conquerors. Eventually Nabopolassar, the viceroy of Babylon, revolted against the Assyrians, and, in league with the Medes, a people outside the Assyrian empire, he attacked and destroyed the Assyrian capital city of Nineveh in 612 B.C. Nabopolassar's son, Nebuchadnezzar, put a final end to the Assyrian empire at the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C., and himself continued the tyrannical methods that had been characteristic of the Assyrians. In the course of his extensive military activities he conquered the southern Israelite kingdom, with its capital at Jerusalem, and carried away its people into captivity in distant lands.

It is quite reasonable to think of Nebuchadnezzar's power as a continuation of the Assyrian empire, which it so closely resembled in language, culture and methods of operation, and to consider the two together as the first great empire.

Nebuchadnezzar was followed by a series of weak kings. A few years after Nebuchadnezzar's death the ruler of a small section of the group of tribes that had been under the domination of the Medes gained his independence and then brought all the Medes under his authority. His name was Cyrus, and the area he originally ruled was known as Persia. Cyrus led his armies west and north, conquering most of

Asia Minor. Then he turned south and conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.

This was an important date in ancient history since it marked the end of the first great empire and the establishment of the second -- the Persian empire.

After capturing Babylon the Persians marched to the east and conquered all the tribes as far as the Punjab, even including the northwestern portion of India.

At Cyrus' death the Persian empire embraced an area at least three times as large as that formerly ruled by Nebuchadnezzar and included at least twice as many people. Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, conquered Egypt and for a century Egypt was part of the Persian empire.

In 334 B.C. the Persian empire, which had lasted two centuries, appeared to be at the very height of its strength. Then a brilliant young Macedonian, Alexander the Great, using the excellent army developed by his father, Philip, king of Macedon, along with many additional soldiers from Greece itself, attacked the Persian empire and completely subjugated it in a series of skillful campaigns.

This marked the end of the Persian empire. The following period, in which most of its area, along with Greece and Macedonia, was controlled by men of Greek language and culture, is called the Greek or Hellenistic empire.

After twelve years of constant fighting, during which he had conquered this tremendous area, Alexander suddenly died. His generals expected to maintain the vast empire as a unit, but there was no clear evidence as to who should be its ruler. Possible candidates included an idiot half-brother of Alexander and Alexander's posthumous son. Soon the Macedonian generals were fighting for supremacy and in the process every member of Alexander's family was murdered. Within a few years each of five principal contenders held a large part of the empire and was struggling to obtain control over all of it. The fortunes of various antagonists rose and fell, and some were eliminated. Eventually three of them established lasting dynasties that ruled large sections of the empire, while a number of smaller sections became independent kingdoms. All these

regions were under the leadership of men of Greek or Macedonian background, and the same general type of culture was dominant throughout. Although these Hellenistic kingdoms were politically independent of one another, the following two centuries can be properly considered as the period of the Grecian (or Hellenistic) empire, since Greek language, culture and attitudes characterized the rulers of almost the whole area of the former Persian empire.

During this time the city of Rome gained control over most of Italy and came into conflict with the great power of Carthage in north Africa. A long struggle eradicated Carthage and established Rome as a great power. Then Rome began to extend its power in an easterly direction and gradually brought many sections of Alexander's empire under its control. During the two centuries in which it was extending its power over the areas controlled by the descendants of Alexander's generals, the Roman republic must have appeared to the conquered peoples as the greatest and most destructive force of all, well fitting the iron portion of the image described in Daniel 2 that "breaks and smashes everything" (v. 40), and the description in Daniel 7 of "a fourth beast -- terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left" (v. 7). This empire continued to be an effective force much longer than any of the three previous ones. About four centuries after the birth of Christ the Roman empire began to disintegrate. By A.D. 400 various Germanic groups were beginning to march across it, pillaging its cities and establishing themselves in practical independence within its borders. Some historians consider the Roman empire as having ended in A.D. 476, since in that year a German conqueror abolished the name of Roman emperor, as far as the west was concerned. Yet many of the forms of Roman government were preserved. Roman ideas and culture continued to exert tremendous influence throughout Europe (and America) during

most of the next 1500 years. For many centuries the Latin language continued to be the medium of scholarly intercourse, and the administrative terms characteristic of the Roman empire were preserved in the Roman Catholic church. Even today the pope is often called a "pontiff," and the letters P.M. (Pontifex Maximus) that were proudly used after the names of Roman emperors are affixed to those of Roman Catholic popes. Roman tradition continues in varying extent in much of Europe and America.

In the area that had belonged to the Babylonian and Persian empires the situation has been different. Shortly after A.D. 600 a new force came out of the desert, bringing a different language and culture to dominance in most of this area. For more than a thousand years the followers of Mohammed controlled most of the region formerly held by the Babylonian and Persian empires, including most of the areas directly involved in biblical history.

Knowledge of these basic facts is vital to an understanding of the general structure of the book of Daniel. It will be necessary to touch upon further details at various points in our discussion of the relevant passages in Daniel's predictions.

We should be very careful not to look briefly at a prophecy of Daniel and then try to twist ancient history into conformity with our understanding of the prophecy. Where historical facts are known they should be carefully examined in order to determine fairly and objectively their relation to Daniel's predictions.

## **2. The Need of Special Attention to Problems of Translation**

The men who made the King James Version (KJV) were outstanding scholars, thoroughly trained in the original languages. Their translation was an excellent one for their day. Like all human beings they were fallible and occasionally made mistakes, but it can safely be asserted that rarely if ever has a more accurate translation been made of any book into any language. Yet this version is now more than

three and a half centuries old, and the English language has greatly changed.

Apart from guesses made from the sentence as a whole, very few people today would know what is meant by such words or phrases as "We do you to wit" (2 Cor. 8:1), "leasing" (Ps. 4:2), and "froward" (2 Sam. 22:27). Much more serious than the cases where a word has become obsolete are the many instances where a word that is still in use has changed its meaning, as in Psalm 119:147, "I prevented the dawning of the morning."

When the writer began to teach Hebrew he endeavored to have his students understand precisely what the various forms of Hebrew mean. In many instances there is one form for the second person masculine singular of a verb, another for its second feminine singular, another for its second masculine plural, and still another for its second feminine plural. Thus four different possibilities in Hebrew may all be expressed in English by the word "you." It was my thought that students would find it easier to learn Hebrew if the language of three centuries ago were used in the exercises, with the old English pronoun "thou" used for the singular and "you" for the plural, thus having two possibilities for the four Hebrew forms instead of only one. Before long, however, I found that most students today, even college graduates, have little understanding of what "thou" means. Given sentences to translate from English into Hebrew they were just as apt to render "thou" by the plural as by the singular. This made me realize that many of the words used three hundred years ago convey little meaning to most people living today, and that where the Hebrew has a distinction that cannot be expressed in modern English a translator must either ignore it or indicate it by a footnote.

Unless one has personally tried to make a translation from one language to another he cannot realize the difficulties of such a task. Although some linguists have declared that any thought that can be clearly expressed in one language can be clearly expressed in almost any other, the manner of expressing it may be very different. A word-for-word translation can easily give a completely false idea. 21

Every language has its particular idioms, and these, if literally rendered by the words of a different language, are apt to be quite meaningless. In addition, meanings and usages of particular words vary greatly in different languages.

It is important to remember that in ordinary language no word is a point. Every word actually represents an area. These areas of thought overlap very considerably. Thus the English word "earth" could mean the entire globe or it could be used to indicate a small amount of soil. The Hebrew word *eres* which is translated "earth" hundreds of times, is often used in the sense of country or land, as in "the land of Israel." The English and Hebrew usages are far from identical and a translator often has difficulty in selecting the word that will fit the particular context.

We speak of the Bible as one book, yet we also speak of the second book of Samuel. The word "book" can represent an entire volume or it can indicate a smaller unit.

The word "seal" occurs a number of times in the book of Daniel, as well as elsewhere in the Old Testament. In ancient times every important man had his own seal,<sup>2</sup> which he affixed to documents or letters to authenticate them<sup>3</sup> as actually coming from him, thus corresponding to a modern signature. Even today the word "seal" is sometimes placed at the foot of a legal document to indicate where one should sign. Sometimes, however, the seal attached to a letter had an additional purpose, that of closing it up so that unauthorized persons could not see its contents before it reached the one for whom it was intended.<sup>4</sup> Occasionally the Bible speaks of sealing up something so that it can no longer be used.<sup>5</sup> It is often necessary, before understanding a passage in which this word occurs, to determine which of the various ideas is involved.

Context often affects the translation of a word, sometimes more than it should. It is desirable, in translating any word, to avoid bringing in an idea from the particular context, unless it can be clearly shown from its use in other contexts that the included idea is really involved in the particular word.

The area of meaning expressed by a Hebrew or Greek word is sometimes so large that two or more English words are required to cover its range of ideas, and one of the various possibilities must be selected. An outstanding instance is the Hebrew particle *w<sup>e</sup>*. Although *w<sup>e</sup>* roughly corresponds to English "and," its range of meaning is far greater. In the parts of Daniel that were written in Hebrew this particle is rendered "and" a great many times, but in these six chapters the KJV also rendered it forty times as "but," more than twenty times as "then," ten times as "therefore," five or more times as each of the following: "also," "for," "even," "now," "so," or "yea," and occasionally as "yet," "thus," "wherefore," or "so that."

This gives an idea of the range of this one Hebrew word. It is frequently necessary to translate it in various ways, if English readers are to get the meaning that the context requires.

The converse is also true. There are many cases where an English word may represent a number of different Hebrew words. Thus the English word "and" is used in the KJV to translate each of six different Hebrew words, and each of 13 different Greek words. Similarly, the English word "end" is used, in both the KJV and the NIV, to translate each of 16 Hebrew words, and each of three Greek words.

In ancient times the term "king" was generally used both for the ruler of a city and for the ruler of a larger area. Thus a supreme king might have other kings under his control.

The English words "emperor" and "empire" do not occur in the KJV but are important for the understanding of Daniel's prophecies. The story of their origin is worth noting. When Augustus assumed great power in Rome he did not wish to call himself "king," since this was not acceptable to the Romans. Consequently he called himself "imperator" (commander), a title that had sometimes been given to a victorious general. As Roman emperors succeeded one another and exerted almost absolute power over the many nations that Rome had conquered, the title "imperator" (English "emperor") acquired its present meaning. Although the Roman emperor was theoretically



merely the first among the citizens of Rome, his power over the many subject countries was absolute. Thus "emperor" was soon regarded as a higher title than "king," and in the course of time the word "empire" came to indicate control by one nation over people of a different language and culture. Present-day histories sometimes speak of the Roman power as an empire many decades before it had an emperor, since the Roman republic was already ruling over several conquered nations. The great prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7 speak of four kingdoms, but what is meant would today be indicated by the term "empire."

It should be noted that Daniel 2:4-7:28 is written in Aramaic, a language closely related to Hebrew, but differing from it in certain important features. In Daniel 2:4 the prophet quoted the Aramaic (KJV Syriack) words spoken by the Chaldeans, and he continued to write in that language until the end of chapter 7. When he began to write chapter 8, giving the account of his second vision, he reverted to Hebrew.

It is not the purpose of the present book to devote any large amount of space to discussing the precise meanings of Hebrew and Aramaic words. Such discussion will generally be confined to instances where the interpretation of a prophecy depends on the precise meaning of a word, or where a false idea has been produced by some misunderstanding.

Early translations frequently provide important evidence of the meaning of a word. The most useful early versions of the Old Testament were made in the Greek language. The earliest of these is called the Septuagint (sometimes represented by the symbol "LXX"). In the case of Daniel a very interesting situation occurs. St. Jerome, who translated the Latin Vulgate directly from the Hebrew at about A.D. 400, said that in the available copies of the Septuagint its original version of Daniel had been replaced by a later translation, that of Theodotion. This is thought to be the case in all but two of the Greek manuscripts that have survived.

At certain points in our detailed discussion of Daniel's

predictions we shall examine both ancient Greek versions to see how their translators understood important words and phrases.

An interesting example is found in Daniel 8:9 where the KJV renders a certain Hebrew phrase as "a little horn," but both ancient Greek versions translate it as "a strong horn." This appears to be a contradiction, but when the Hebrew is examined we find that it literally reads "a horn from littleness" or "a horn more than littleness." The Hebrew preposition *min* generally conveys the idea of spatial separation, but may also express other kinds of difference, and frequently carries the sense of our English phrase "more than." Thus this Hebrew phrase could mean a horn that had begun from littleness but had subsequently become large (as rendered in the New International Version), or it could mean a horn that had always been characterized by the words "more than littleness." The phrase "a little horn" obviously fails to express the meaning of the original. The Greek rendering, "a strong horn," may not be correct, but it is at least worthy of careful consideration. It should not be confused with the expression "another little horn" in the KJV of Daniel 7:8, which is more literally rendered in the NIV as "another horn, a little one."

### **3. Attention to Problems of Transmission**

In studying any ancient writing the question of transmission deserves attention. Since printing was unknown in the western world until the middle of the 15th century, all previous copies of books were made by hand. Every time a manuscript was thus copied mistakes could creep in. In some parts of the Bible problems of transmission are very important.

For many centuries only Hebrew consonants were written. Indications of long vowels were sometimes inserted. There is much agreement among Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament as to consonants, but there is great diversity regarding these "vowel letters," which were some times inserted and sometimes omitted, often depending

merely on the scribe's judgment as to the desired length of the written word.

In the early part of the 10th century A.D. a group of scribes called the Masoretes, who were trying to standardize the Hebrew text, inserted marks above or below the consonants to indicate the vowels that were customarily pronounced after them, in accordance with the tradition that had been handed down orally through the centuries.

At about 1300 places the Masoretes found that the majority of the manuscripts available to them contained a reading that differed somewhat from this oral tradition. In such cases they kept in the text the consonants found in the majority of their manuscripts, but placed in a footnote the consonants that would fit the traditional reading. The vowels of the traditional reading were not placed under the consonants in the note, but were affixed to those in the text, sometimes producing a rather incongruous combination. The reading that the Masoretes preferred was called the *q<sup>e</sup>re* (imperative of Aramaic "to read"). The reading that would be suggested by the consonants retained in the text was called the *kethibh* (Aramaic for "written").

Usually these readings do not differ greatly from one another, though occasionally there is a difference of substantial importance, as in at least one place in the famous prophecy of the 70 weeks (Dan. 9:24).

In most cases the *q<sup>e</sup>re* seems to fit best in the text and scholars usually follow it, though at some places an argument could be made for the reading of the *kethibh*. Whenever such a variant affects the meaning of the prediction in any important way it will be given consideration in our discussion. In such cases the present writer usually prefers not to build on one or other of the two readings, but rather to see what is common to the meaning of both and therefore definite regardless of which reading is taken.

The text of the Old Testament has been preserved with marvelous accuracy, and there is a far smaller number of important variations in our Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament than in the Greek manuscripts of the New

Testament. Yet it is important to remember that there are a few places at which we cannot be entirely certain about the exact original. In the prophecies of Daniel such instances are comparatively rare. There is amazingly little divergence in Hebrew manuscripts of this book.

#### **4. Recognition that we Cannot Expect to Understand Everything**

In interpreting prophecy it is very important that we recognize the limits of our knowledge and that we avoid building theories on insufficient evidence. We must approach God's Word with humility, not expecting that everything will be equally clear. Much will be easy to understand; some statements will require a great deal of study; we may find portions that we do not understand at all.

There are a number of reasons why we cannot expect to understand everything in God's Word:

- 1) The Bible is a divine book. It would be absurd to suggest that the knowledge of the infinite God could be fully contained in one volume. Any book that expresses the ideas of the infinite God will sometimes touch on matters that are difficult for human beings to understand.
- 2) The Bible was written when the material aspects of life were very different from those of our present time. This was true even one hundred years ago. There were then few telephones, no radio, no airplanes, and no automobiles. Good roads were practically nonexistent. Many days of traveling by ship were required to go from the United States to Europe -- a trip that is now made in a few hours by air. Few people today clearly realize how tremendously great are the technical changes that have occurred in recent years. As a result of these changes the situations of even a century ago are now hard to imagine. Two thousand years ago they differed

still more. It takes diligent effort to properly understand material written at that time.

Human nature is the same as it was two thousand years ago. Eternity is the same as it was. Man's origin and man's destiny remain exactly as they were. There is just as much need of studying the teachings of Christ and seeking a personal relationship to God as there ever was. Although the great truths of the Bible are just as vital today as they ever were, there may be aspects that were easily understood at an earlier time, or that perhaps will be at a later time, that are not easily understood in our day.

- 3) The Bible was not written for just one period. After men had turned away from God and tried to forget that He even existed, the Lord gave His people the Bible in order that they might be able to ascertain His will. He made it more attractive by including in it some of the finest literature ever written. Many different approaches are found in the various books of the Bible, all to the end of presenting God's truth and giving it an entrance to men's hearts.

Conditions change; attitudes change; immediate needs change. Since the Bible was written to meet the needs of men at all times we cannot expect that all of it will be equally clear to those living at any one time. Some parts of the Bible that might have been difficult to understand two thousand years ago are so planned as exactly to meet our present needs. Some parts that might have been easily understood and immediately relevant to a situation at some previous time may today be very difficult to understand.

- 4) Much of the book of Daniel was explicitly written for the distant future. This is made clear in Daniel 12:4 where Daniel is told: "But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many

will go here and there to increase knowledge." The same idea is repeated in verse 9: "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end."

It is thus made clear that some predictions will not be fully understood until the approach of the time to which they refer.

- 5) It is easy to forget that the Bible, though expressing the mind of the infinite God, is written in human language. In every language words change their meaning from time to time. As we have noticed, each of them expresses a certain area of meaning, not a point. The areas in different languages vary greatly.
- 6) It is a common error to think that one verse of the Bible can be taken by itself and squeezed to the point where a tremendous amount of truth may be extracted from it. Such an approach is dangerous, in view of the nature of human language.

God has provided a Bible that is true and inerrant. If it is properly interpreted no false idea will be deduced from it, but its interpretation requires comparison of scripture with scripture, and at any one period of time some of its statements may elude full comprehension.

##### **5. Recognition that Prophecy, like History, is by its Nature a Survey Rather than a Complete Statement**

It is a common misunderstanding to think that prophecy gives a complete picture of the future so that by studying it we can know every important detail. Such an expectation is bound to be disappointed, not only in prophecy, but even in history. A little thought will show how impossible it is to expect that either of these will give a complete answer to every question that might be asked.

Thus if a man were to say that last year he made a trip from New York to Los Angeles the statement might be absolutely true but would certainly not be complete. It would not tell whether he had made the trip by air, by train, by bus, by private car, or by ship through the Panama Canal. The addition of one of these features would still leave the statement incomplete, for it would not tell what precise route had been taken, or what airline, steamship, or bus line had been used. If these facts were given, the question could then be asked whether the trip had been made continuously or whether there had been a stopover at some point. The statement that one had stopped to see friends in Omaha would not indicate whether he had or had not made a similar stop in Pittsburgh, unless it were specifically mentioned that only one stop-over had been made.

Almost any statement can give rise to many questions that it does not answer. Answers to some of these questions may be inferred but such inferences must be handled with great caution.

John ended his gospel with the words: "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (John 21:25). Thus John makes it clear that his gospel is not a complete account of the life and doings of Christ.

Failure to realize that a statement, even though entirely true, is still only a survey, has led to the finding of seeming contradictions in the gospels. Thus Matthew 28:1 says that when Jesus rose from the dead "Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb," while Luke 24:10 says that there were additional women with them. Matthew 28:2-6 says that "an angel of the Lord" invited the women to see the place where the Lord had lain, but Luke 24:4 says that "two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them."

Neither of these differences is actually a contradiction.

Mention of an angel does not mean that there was only one, and mention of two Marys need not mean that other women

were not also in the group that went to the tomb. The statements in Matthew are just as true as those in Luke, but not as complete in these two respects. In certain other matters Matthew is more complete than Luke, since Matthew tells about the earthquake and the terror of the guards, facts not mentioned in Luke.

Taken by itself the account of the reign of Abijah in 1 Kings 14:31-15:7 (here spelled Abijam in most of the Hebrew manuscripts) could lead one to think that this ruler was entirely wicked. Taken by itself the account of the same man in 2 Chronicles 13 could lead one to have the opposite view of his character, particularly in view of the godly character of Asa, the son who followed him as king. Yet both pictures can be entirely true and may well represent his character at different periods of his life. In addition, it might be noted that 2 Chronicles deals principally with the words that he spoke in his efforts to rally his troops, and makes no general judgment on his character. This seeming contradiction should warn us of the danger of drawing inferences that go beyond what is clearly stated in Scripture.

These examples from other parts of the Bible illustrate the necessity of taking care not to assume that a statement is more complete than its writer intended. There are statements in the prophecies of Daniel where too great an assumption of completeness has led interpreters to reach conclusions that contradict the actual facts of history. Thus in Daniel 8:4 the conquests of Cyrus are symbolized by the words: "I watched the ram as he charged toward the west and the north and the south." A number of commentaries assert that there is here no mention of the east because Cyrus would make few if any conquests in that direction.<sup>6</sup> Yet historical records show that after Cyrus led his armies west to conquer the territory north of Babylonia, then north to conquer Asia Minor, and then south again in order to make a complete conquest of the Babylonian empire, he did not stop his aggressive career but again turned eastward. The territories Cyrus and Darius subdued in the east may have been almost as large as those the Persians conquered in the directions mentioned in Daniel's vision.



The omission of any reference to the east was not caused by an erroneous idea that the Persians would make no conquests in the east but by the fact that what was being symbolically predicted was the replacement of the Babylonian empire by the Persian empire, which occurred when Cyrus turned south and conquered Babylon. His later conquests were not involved in the purpose of that part of the vision. Here a number of commentaries, by assuming a greater completeness in Daniel's vision than was intended, have made statements that contradict the known facts of history.

## **6. Recognition of the Fact of Progressive Revelation**

As every educator realizes, it is usually difficult for the human mind to become accustomed to a new idea. A striking illustration is found in the New Testament. The gospels state that on several occasions Jesus predicted His coming death and resurrection. Yet the idea seemed so strange to the disciples that His words were quickly forgotten, and it was only after the events had occurred that they realized that He had predicted them.

When God reveals His great truths He sometimes begins by giving a hint about a matter. Later He might give another hint or reveal additional features. Still later He would give a fuller discussion. Eventually He might present the matter still more completely, adding details that had previously been merely suggested. This principle of progressive revelation is vital to understanding the Bible. Through the ages God gradually led His people into the acceptance and understanding of truths that were previously unknown to them.

The book of Daniel has many illustrations of this important principle. It contains a number of revelations given over a period of years, often overlapping, and frequently adding new aspects of ideas previously suggested.

In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign God enabled Daniel to interpret a dream that had greatly puzzled this King. He told the king that the dream presented four

powerful kingdoms that would succeed one another, with the fourth kingdom including two phases. Then all sinful human government would be destroyed and the kingdom of God established in its place (ch. 2)

About 45 years later God gave a vision to Daniel himself (ch. 7) in which many of the same events were presented under a different figure. This second vision touched upon certain additional aspects, giving a fuller account of the latter part of the fourth kingdom, and adding much new detail to the picture of the predicted establishment of the kingdom of God.

Some of the ideas in Nebuchadnezzar's vision were clarified in the later vision and new aspects were added. Nothing in the earlier vision was shown to be erroneous, but greater understanding was added regarding the matters previously presented.

Chapter 8 tells of a new vision, in which the second and third of the four kingdoms mentioned in chapters 2 and 7 were more fully described and Daniel was given information about an important crisis that would occur after the third kingdom had been in existence for a considerable time.

Chapter 11 uses direct language instead of presenting matters in symbolic form, as was done in the earlier visions. It briefly mentions the end of the second kingdom, and then describes events during several generations of the third kingdom, leading up to a description of two crises that many of God's people would have to face

As we examine the relation of each of these visions to those given earlier we see how God progressively revealed new details and gave clearer understanding about matters of which only hints had previously been given.

Progressive revelation does not mean that God ever led men to believe erroneous ideas and later replaced these ideas with correct ones as human understanding developed.

A Christian child was taught to believe in Santa Claus as a real person, and the pretense was continued for a number of years. Then the parents explained to the child that this was a pleasant fiction, and really a sort of game played by

the parents who were the real givers of the presents. The child responded: "So there is no Santa Claus! I suppose there is no Jesus Christ either?" If we lie to our children we lay the foundation for later destruction of beliefs that are most precious to us. Of course involved matters cannot be fully explained to children and must be stated in rather elementary form. Yet we should be careful that whatever is said is true, even though incomplete.

God never leads His people to believe what is false. Human beings may misunderstand the divine revelation and build false ideas on it. When this occurs reexamination of God's earlier revelation shows that the false ideas were produced by human misunderstanding of what God had said, and that from the very start all that God had revealed was true and dependable.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In 305 B.C. Antigonus and his son Demetrius assumed the title of king, claiming the entire empire of Alexander. Then Ptolemy, Lysimachus, and Seleucus declared themselves also to be kings and joined forces against Antigonus, who was defeated and killed. After nearly twenty years of additional fighting the family of Lysimachus was eliminated, and three larger kingdoms (along with several smaller ones) were established with sufficient strength to last more than a century. The descendants of Antigonus and Demetrius ruled over Macedonia and much of Greece, the Ptolemies ruled Egypt, and the house of Seleucus ruled the eastern regions, including much of Asia Minor and Syria, along with the other parts of Asia that had been conquered by Alexander.
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. 1 Ki. 21:8; Est. 3:10, 12.
- <sup>3</sup> Cf. Neh. 9:38; Est. 8:8; Dan. 6:17.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. Is. 29:11; Jer. 32:11; Dan 12:9.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. Job 37:7; Song 4:12.
- <sup>6</sup> E.g. Barnes, Stuart, Leupold, and Young; cf. the excellent statement by Keil, *in loc.*

# Dangers to Avoid

## 1. Oversystematizing

In studying any part of the Bible we should be aware of certain common dangers. One that is extremely difficult to avoid is that of oversystematizing. On the basis of only a few facts one may build a whole system of interpretation, and then, as new facts are encountered, endeavor to fit them into the system that is already established in his mind. This danger is particularly acute in the study of predictions, which may contain references to facts or situations quite different from those known by the particular interpreter. It is natural to try to relate each verse to a preconceived system, forcing into line statements that resist such a relation, and passing over with little attention any that do not seem to fit.

Even in those fields of science where verification by experiment is possible this danger is always present. When tests are made to determine the effect of drugs on people there is always a control group, as it is recognized that preconceived ideas often affect the results produced by experimental drugs. If this danger is so great in matters that can be repeated under controlled conditions, there is even greater need to avoid it in areas in which the only evidence consists of interpretation of words and sentences. In the study of any portion of the Bible there are two reasons why it is vital to avoid oversystematizing: 1) There is always a danger of misinterpreting individual statements

in order to fit them into a system; 2) even more important, there is a tendency to overlook vital matters if they do not appear clearly to fit into a general scheme.

## **2. Circular Reasoning**

A second common error is that of circular reasoning. It is easy to draw conclusions from a passage of Scripture and then to find the same results in another passage, even though it may actually be dealing with a different subject or looking at the same subject from quite a different angle. It is true that it is desirable to explain the complex in the light of the simple; yet if the difficulties of a complicated passage are too lightly brushed aside, a large part of its important meaning may be missed.

The Bible expresses the mind of the infinite God, and it is reasonable to expect that any part of it may throw valuable light on any other part. Studies that bring together the teaching of various sections of the Scripture and show their interrelation are important and useful. Yet the purpose of the present treatise is somewhat different. Realizing fully the great danger of circular reasoning, it is our endeavor, so far as possible, to see exactly what are the possibilities of each passage, taken by itself.

Thus in the present work an attempt will be made to see what can be said about the prophecies of Daniel without bringing into consideration evidence from other Biblical passages except when their bearing is so clear that no intelligent person should question it. Important as it is to use the light of the New Testament in interpreting the Old Testament, this will be to a large extent avoided in the present discussion. In fact, our use of New Testament passages will be restricted to a few very clear New Testament teachings. The same attitude will be taken toward other Old Testament books, except where the relevance is absolutely unmistakable. Even in the book of Daniel itself earlier predictions will be studied without light from later ones, though it will be considered proper in studying Daniel's later predictions to note their relation to his earlier ones.

Synthetic study is highly desirable, but it is a further step, and can often produce serious error if the earlier procedure, which this book is attempting to perform, has not first been carried to its conclusion.

### 3. Failure to Differentiate Levels of Certainty

Two remaining dangers in Bible study need to be briefly mentioned. The first of these is the danger of failing to differentiate between levels of certainty. In the study of the Bible, as in any field of history or of science, some facts are well established while others are far less certain. Failure to differentiate can do great harm, both in affecting the results of the study and in giving readers a false impression.

In this connection the writer often thinks of a book on the ancient history of an important country that appeared several years ago. It was written by a professor in a great university who had devoted many years to the study of ancient history. He was probably as familiar with the many archaeological activities that had been carried on in that particular country as any man living. The book was well illustrated and beautifully printed. The writer's ideas were clearly expressed. At first sight it seemed to be an ideal book to introduce readers to the study of this very important area. Yet the book failed completely in its purpose. The book contained a great many statements about facts that were well known and recognized by all students in this field. These statements were made almost incidentally, with no attempt to give evidence for them or to support them. Upon reading these statements a person unfamiliar with that field of study would think that they were only incidental and were unimportant. On all matters on which various viewpoints are possible the author selected a particular viewpoint and expressed it dogmatically. The less certain the view, the more positive would be his statements in its favor. When the author would present a new theory of his own of which no one else had yet heard, or even if he desired ironically to present an idea that he felt sure no sensible person would take seriously, he would state the

idea in such a dogmatic and positive form that a reader who was not an expert in this field would think it was one of the matters on which no expert could hold a different opinion. Thus the statements in the book were stressed in a way that was quite the reverse of the degree of certainty. While the book contained a great deal of valuable material it was practically valueless for anyone who was not already a master of the subject.

Among the many books that have been published on Daniel, I have rarely seen one that has gone to such an extreme, but there is often a tendency in that direction. The intent of the present volume is the exact opposite. It is not our purpose to urge a definite conclusion as to matters that are questionable, and it is certainly not our purpose to try to fit the statements of Daniel into any particular scheme of eschatology. It is our purpose to take the book as a vital divine record and see exactly what it says. We desire to stress those matters that are so clearly stated that they are unquestionable, and to state positively those matters on which the evidence should lead any intelligent person to hold a definite opinion. Wherever, in the light of intelligent examination of the facts, a valid argument can be made for each of two positions, it is our purpose to present both interpretations and leave it to the reader to decide between them. Where there is so little evidence that it is so slight that it is highly questionable whether a correct answer can be given at present it is our desire to state that fact, and sometimes to pass lightly over such matters since lengthy discussion of them might divert attention from our primary objective.

#### **4. Failure to Follow Scriptural Emphasis**

Another danger that we shall seek to avoid is that of neglecting the emphasis of Scripture. It is truly sad when churches or denominations divide over matters on which there may be legitimate differences of opinion. Sometimes such divisions have occurred because one group of Christian leaders has laid great stress on a certain interpretation

of a few verses, while another group has felt that these particular verses should be interpreted in a different way. God's people should stand firmly on the entire Scripture, accepting everything that they find clearly taught in it, but reserving judgment on points that are not clear, and showing Christian charity toward Bible believers who hold other views regarding matters on which equally earnest and intelligent Christians may differ.

It is easy to make much of a few verses and ignore the rest of Scripture. Not only is it important to find what Scripture teaches; it is important to note its emphasis. We should stand firmly upon all that is clearly taught in Scripture. We should carefully study matters on which Scripture does not speak clearly, but should endeavor, in expressing our ideas, to avoid every form of dogmatism and every type of expression that can be used by Satan to cause unnecessary controversy among equally dedicated Christians.





# A Look at Some Important Problems

## 1. The Interpretation of Symbols

A special problem in the interpretation of Daniel's predictions is the matter of symbolism, such as is found in chapters 2, 4, 7 and 8. The problem appears in the first long prophecy in the book (ch. 2), where Daniel describes and interprets Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

This dream involved a great image, evidently the statue of a man. Its head was made of gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay (v. 32-33). A stone from the mountain fell on the feet of the image and destroyed it. Then the stone grew until it became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

Without the subsequent interpretation (vv. 37-45) there would be no solid basis for understanding the image. It could be interpreted in many ways. If Daniel had not said that it represented a historical progression going downward from the head to the feet (vv. 38-41), it could just as well be suggested that the progression would go upward from the feet to the head, or that the dream pictured conditions that would exist simultaneously in various areas.

Without the interpretation there would also be no way to know which features of the vision were significant.

Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, "You are that head of gold" (v. 38). Nothing was said about any specific meaning for the mouth, the nose, or the eyes. There is no reason to

think that Nebuchadnezzar was a better speaker than any of the kings represented in the following sections of the image, or that he had a more acute sense of smell or better vision.

The second portion of the image, consisting of its chest and arms, could easily suggest that the second kingdom would be composed of three parts represented by the two arms and the central trunk. Historically there is nothing that would correspond to any such division. There is no reason to think that the elbow had a special meaning, or that the hands or fingers did. In such a prophetic representation it would be possible that any or all of these features might have a meaning, but there is no reason to think that this is the case here.

This brings squarely before us a vital problem in the interpretation of symbolism. How can we determine which features of a vision are significant, and which are merely incidental to the picture? Four suggested criteria are worthy of mention.

The first and most important indication that a particular feature has a definite meaning would be a specific statement in the interpretation. Here Daniel says that the head represents Nebuchadnezzar and that the other parts represent three later kingdoms.

A second indication that a feature is of importance in determining the meaning is the presence of something quite out of the ordinary. Except for the fact that this statue is said to be composed of four different metals, it would seem to be a normal image of a man. If it were said that the image had three arms, or that one leg was longer than the other, one might reasonably expect the peculiarity to have a definite meaning.

There is a third indication which must be applied with great caution. When one knows the general meaning of a symbol he is justified, to a limited extent, in looking for detailed similarities between it and the thing symbolized. Since no symbol corresponds in all respects to what it is intended to represent, this method may easily lead to false conclusions. Its dangers can be illustrated by comparing the third and fourth parts of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's

image with the history of the kingdoms that they represented.

Since the third kingdom was represented by the belly and thighs, it might be suggested that the third kingdom would be a unified structure during a great part of its existence, but would eventually divide into two parts. As a matter of fact the Greek empire existed as a unit for hardly a score of years and was then broken into three great independent kingdoms and a number of smaller ones. The account does not pinpoint the change from bronze to iron. Since the thighs, which were made of bronze, are part of the third kingdom, it is quite evident that the upper part of the legs still represents the third kingdom, and that the part of the image that represents the fourth kingdom is from its very beginning divided into two separate structures. This would be true whether the iron began at the knees or somewhat nearer to the hips. In either case it would not give a detailed picture of the Roman empire which, unlike the Greek empire, was a highly centralized organization, and continued to have all authority centered in Rome for several centuries. The idea of an eastern and a western Roman empire did not even begin until the unified Roman empire had existed for a longer period than the entire history of each of the two preceding kingdoms.<sup>1</sup>

Caution is also necessary in the application of a fourth criterion, which involves the carrying of symbolism back and forth between two parallel visions. Although the symbolism of chapter 7 is very different from that of chapter 2, there is so much similarity of general outline that most interpreters consider them to represent the same general course of events. In chapter 7 the fourth beast is represented as having ten horns, a very unusual feature. It is explicitly stated that these ten horns represent ten kings. Many interpreters carry this back into the interpretation of chapter 2 and say that the toes of the image must also represent these ten kings. Inherently there is no reason why the toes should have a specific meaning any more than the fingers. It is not stated that Nebuchadnezzar noticed how many toes were actually depicted on the statue, nor does

Daniel make any reference to the number of toes. Since the vision in chapter 7 was not given until at least 45 years after Nebuchadnezzar had his dream it is highly questionable whether its detail can be properly carried back into the understanding of chapter 2.

Some commentators carry such an interpretation so far as to say that in the statement in 2:44, "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom," the words "those kings" refer to ten kings represented by the ten toes of the image. Since there is no definite indication in chapter 2 that the toes have a specific meaning, we must regard this interpretation as unjustified. In 2:44 the words "those kings" must refer to kings mentioned in chapter 2.

It is our purpose in the present volume to expound those features of the symbols in Daniel that can be considered as certain, to point out the relative degree of probability of suggested interpretations where difference of opinion is reasonable, and to indicate clearly the error of ideas based on unwarranted attitudes toward symbolic representations.

Additional features of the symbolism in chapter 2 and in the other portions of the book will be examined in detail when we consider the particular chapters.

## **2. The Time Perspective of Prophecy**

It is sometimes said that prophecy is history written in advance. There is an element of truth in this statement, but it is not entirely true. The purpose of the historian is simply to tell what has occurred in the past and to show the interrelation of events. The work of the prophet involves urging people to obey God's law, rebuking those who oppose what is right and comforting the godly. Though prediction is an important part of prophecy, its purpose is quite different from that of the historian.

Those who expect prophecy to be history written in advance sometimes have the idea that prophecy will tell in straight chronological order exactly what is going to happen in the future. Yet anyone who has done much reading in history (and particularly anyone who tries to write a book

of history) quickly learns that the situation is far more complicated. One would hardly give the title "history" to a mere book of annals or chronology that would describe what happened on the 1st of January in a certain year in Cuba and Washington, what happened on the 2nd in Portugal and in Colorado, what happened on the 3rd in Texas, in Washington, and in Japan, what happened on the 4th in Cuba and in Syria, etc. Such a book would make very dull reading and would not be really informative. In order to understand what happened in any of these areas, it is necessary to refer to previous events and situations.

Any readable history of the present century would describe the important events in one country for a certain length of time, noting its relation with other areas, and then would describe those of another country for a similar (or overlapping) period. There should be constant interrelations, but in order to make the progress of events clear one part of the history would have to deal with a particular area or subject, while another part might discuss what happened at the same time in a different region. Thus for any large area historical material would be presented in an order that is to some extent logical rather than chronological.

If the book's objective were not specifically to write a history, but rather to show the importance of some force, movement, or viewpoint by giving illustrations from history, the order would be still further from being strictly chronological. In discussing each phase the writer might show how it had been exemplified in various areas at various times. Within each of these sections there would tend to be a chronological order but there would be frequent shifts back and forth according to the nature of the material presented.

A similar situation exists in prophecy. The prophets did not simply describe the events of the future in temporal order. This was not their purpose. They were sent to rebuke sin and also to give assurance of God's existence and of His love for all who receive by faith His provision for their salvation. In certain sections their perspective may be strictly chronological; often the order is logical rather than chronological;

sometimes it is a combination of the two. Always the primary purpose must be kept in mind.

An interesting example of a perspective that is logical rather than chronological is found in 1 Kings 19:15-16 where God comforts His despondent prophet by giving future predictions in the form of commands, saying: "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet."

The commands in these two verses were beyond Elijah's natural power to execute. He could not order that a new dynasty be placed in control of Israel. It was far beyond his ability to reach out to the powerful nation of Aram (KJV Syria) and establish a new king there. The apparent commands were really predictions that God would bring about a change of dynasty in each of these nations, so that in each case a man with no legitimate claim would become king. Although it is not equally apparent, the third command was also beyond Elijah's power. Only God could say who would be given prophetic power similar to that exercised by Elijah himself. Here God reassured Elijah of His divine control by telling him the names of those who would assume leadership in the next generation.

The third of these predictions was fulfilled first. After a time of doing menial services for Elijah, Elisha succeeded him as God's spokesman (1 Ki. 19:19; 2 Ki. 2:9-15). Some years later, long after Elijah's departure, a man named Hazael, whom the Assyrian annals call "son of a nobody,"<sup>2</sup> murdered the king of Aram and seized his throne (2 Ki. 8:7-15). Still later, a man named Jehu, who, so far as we know, had no claim to the throne of Israel, killed all the descendants of Ahab and established a new dynasty (2 Ki. 9-10). Thus these three predictions were not arranged in chronological but in logical order. First, God gave Elijah assurance of His power over the strong nation that was Israel's enemy by declaring that a change of dynasty would occur there and naming the man who would seize the kingship. Then he declared that in Elijah's own country a

new dynasty would displace the one then headed by Ahab and Jezebel, before whose threats Elijah had fled. After God had given these evidences of His control over the nations He designated the man who would continue Elijah's own work. The perspective was clearly logical rather than chronological.

In order to meet the needs of those to whom the prophet speaks or writes, prophetic statements are frequently presented in such a way as to be logically related to a present situation instead of being chronologically related to each other. Thus, when the prophet has endeavored to persuade individuals to turn away from sin by describing one or more future calamities, his strong emphasis on sin and retribution may lead to an urgent need to bring encouragement and comfort to those who are true believers. As the true believers realize the terrible nature of the sin in which they themselves, as part of the nation, are necessarily implicated, and look forward to the terrible events that are predicted, they may tend to become discouraged. It then becomes an important part of the prophet's work to tell them about the great blessings that God has planned for the more distant future.

The perspective of prophecy has been compared to the situation of a man who stands on a high hill and looks at a number of fairly distant ranges of mountains. At one point in the landscape certain high ridges on the nearest range may completely hide the ranges behind. At another point he may see something in the second range. At still another point something in the fourth range may appear to be immediately behind the first range. Often the events in the area between are not visible to the observer.

In some predictive passages it is very easy to understand the time relation of future events; in others this relation may require very careful study. It should never be taken for granted that the perspective of prophecy is entirely simple. Each case should be carefully studied.

### **3. Intervals**

Unless exact dates are constantly given there are sure to



be unspecified intervals in any historical account. It is often impossible to know the length of these intervals.

An account of famous Americans might mention that John Adams was President of the United States but failed of re-election and that his son John Quincy Adams was also elected President of the United States and also failed to be re-elected. Such a statement would not necessarily mention the interval of 24 years between the presidencies of the two Adamses. Similarly an account of the Harrison family might state that William Henry Harrison was elected President of the United States but died shortly after he was inaugurated, and that his grandson, Benjamin Harrison, was elected President but was not elected to a second term. Here again the interval of 48 years between the two presidencies might not be mentioned.

Similar instances frequently occur in the historical sections of the Bible. Two interesting ones might be noted in 2 Kings 19. Verses 20-34 of that chapter contain a long message from God that Isaiah passed on to Hezekiah at the time of Sennacherib's invasion, when it appeared certain, from a human standpoint, that Jerusalem would soon be conquered by this powerful Assyrian king. In verse 29 Isaiah predicted that the Assyrian danger would continue for another two years, but that in the third year it would again be safe to leave the protection of the city walls and do normal work in the fields. Thus Isaiah made it clear that the present danger from the Assyrians would continue for two years. Yet Isaiah's prediction is immediately followed, in verse 35, by the account of its fulfillment. Obviously there is an interval of at least two years between verse 34 and verse 35, and we must understand the words, "that night," which begin verse 35, as pointing not to the time when the prediction was given but to the later time when it was fulfilled.

Another interval is found between verse 36 and verse 37 of the same chapter. Verse 36 tells about Sennacherib's return to Nineveh, and verse 37 describes his death. The casual reader might think that the events in verse 37 immediately follow those described in verse 36. Yet Assyrian

records show that there was an interval of twenty years (or seven years, at the very least) between the return from Jerusalem mentioned in verse 36 and the assassination described in verse 37<sup>3</sup>

Unspecified intervals also frequently occur in books of prophecy. This fact, which might seem quite obvious, is often overlooked by interpreters, who sometimes insist, when a prophet describes two events in succession, that the second must immediately follow the first, without an interval.

Such an interval occurs in chapter 2, in Daniel's first extensive prophecy. In the course of his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream about an image of a man, composed of sections made of different metals, Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, "You are that head of gold. After you, another kingdom will rise" (Dan. 2:38d-39a).

From this statement one might conclude that the second kingdom would rise immediately after Nebuchadnezzar's death. Actually, however, at least four kings reigned over the Babylonian empire during the 23 years between Nebuchadnezzar's death and the Persian conquest.

An equally clear illustration is found at the beginning of chapter 11. Verse 2, which tells how the Persians would attempt to conquer Greece, is immediately followed by verse 3 which describes Alexander the Great, who would conquer the Persian empire. There is an unspecified interval of more than a century between these two verses.

In Daniel 11:21-35 the prophet describes the reign of Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), who persecuted the Jewish religion. Then he goes on to tell about a persecutor whose actions differ in many ways from what is known historically about Antiochus and this is immediately followed in chapter 12 by an account of the final resurrection at the end of the present age. Anyone who believes that the book of Daniel contains a revelation from God about events that would occur after Daniel's time must realize that there is an important gap somewhere in this account. Even if all of chapter 11 were taken as a description of Antiochus Epiphanes, as is done by those

who hold the Maccabean view, there would have to be a long interval between the end of chapter 11 and Daniel 12:2 which predicts a resurrection that has not yet occurred.

Most evangelical interpreters follow St. Jerome (who died in A.D. 420) in thinking that the latter part of chapter 11 is a description of a great future enemy of God's people who is often referred to as "Antichrist." If this interpretation is followed, a long interval must be placed somewhere in the course of chapter 11. In either case it must be recognized that here the prophet's vision skips over a long interval without even mentioning it.

Since these instances and others that might be mentioned show clearly that unspecified intervals must be assumed at a number of places in the prophecies of Daniel it would be absurd to rule out the possibility of additional ones, even if not quite so obvious.

#### **4. Double or Multiple Fulfillment**

In interpreting prophecy it is vital to determine whether a prediction points to one event or whether it may have multiple fulfillment. Most predictions can be fairly easily divided into three general types

- 1) The commonest is a specific prediction of a particular event. There are some good examples in Genesis 46:3-4, where God said to Jacob: "I am God, the God of your father... Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes."

These verses contain specific predictions of three particular events. The third was fulfilled when Jacob saw his lost son again, the first when the Israelites greatly increased in number in Egypt, and the second when they were brought out of Egypt into the land of Canaan. Each of these predictions relates to a single group of

events, and none of them shed any direct light on occurrences in the more distant future.

There are many instances of this type of prediction. Another clear example is found in 1 Samuel 10:2ff. where Samuel tells Saul about the persons Saul will meet after they part, and informs him of the news that these persons will give him.

A similar instance is found in 1 Kings 11:31 where a prophet informs Jeroboam that God will eventually give him ten of the tribes then ruled by Solomon. Another instance is Daniel 4:24-26 where Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that God will make him live with the beasts of the field for a time, but will not take away his kingdom. Then the chapter tells how this prediction was literally fulfilled.

All these are specific predictions describing particular events that occurred exactly as predicted. When the predicted event has occurred there is no reason to look for further fulfillment.

Such predictions may be used as examples from which general spiritual lessons may be drawn. All of them are useful evidence of God's power to predict the future. But once the event has occurred the prediction does not give any reason to expect further events of a similar nature. Unless there is clear evidence that a prediction belongs to a different type, it should be considered as being in this category.

- 2) Occasionally a prediction is expressed in the plural and will require two or more events for its fulfillment. When Abraham was living as a sojourner in a strange land God predicted that "kings will come from you" (Gen. 17:6). Fulfillment of this prediction began as soon as descendants of Abraham reigned in the land of Edom (Gen. 36; note v. 31). It was further fulfilled when the

Israelites adopted a monarchical form of government and a long series of descendants of Abraham ruled over them. Unless a prediction in plural form uses a definite number, as when Elisha told Joash that God would enable him to smite Syria three times (2 Kings 13:19), one cannot say that it has been fulfilled until the event predicted has occurred at least twice, and the possibility of additional fulfillments can hardly be ruled out.

When a plural form is used it is often difficult to know whether a prediction describes an isolated event with several parts, or a series of events. This is true of Numbers 24:24, Isaiah 52:15, Joel 2:30, Matthew 24:7, and 2 Timothy 3:13.

- 3) There are also predictions of a general nature, like those in Deuteronomy 28, where verses 2-14 describe the wonderful blessings that God will give His people if they are true to Him, while the succeeding verses portray the great misery that He will cause them to suffer if they forsake Him. Some passages in Isaiah and Jeremiah follow a similar pattern.

There are other predictions that belong in this category, though it may not always be immediately apparent. Thus in Deuteronomy 18 Moses discussed the question how the people could know God's will when Moses himself would no longer be with them. Verses 17-18 read: "The LORD said to me: 'What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.'" The need for continued divine leadership after the death of Moses could hardly be met by the coming of one prophet who would live a few years and then die. Obviously the promise looked forward to a whole succession of prophets bringing God's Word at times of need. Later on the Jews came to realize that this promised succession of prophets would reach a climax in One who would be

the greatest of all the prophets. With this in mind they asked John the Baptist, "Are you the Prophet?" (John 1:21).

In general it may be said that when a singular term is used one may look for evidence in the context that it is a collective or that it points to a series of related occurrences. Unless such evidence is found a prediction should usually be considered as describing a single event.

Students of prophecy sometimes use the term "double fulfillment" as meaning that a prediction given in the singular might have two unrelated fulfillments. The present writer believes this view to be erroneous.

In the book of Daniel the question of possible multiple fulfillment has particular application to predictions about Antiochus Epiphanes or about the great final enemy of God's people generally called Antichrist. There are passages in Daniel where one or other of these two great persecutors is described. In each case we must carefully examine the context to determine which enemy of God's people is in view. The present writer is convinced that there is no warrant for confusing these two men or for considering any one statement as describing both of them.

## **5. Types**

Many of Daniel's prophecies involve symbolic representation of future events. This is entirely different from what theologians call "types" -- a word that is used to indicate the fact that something in the Old Testament may be properly taken as foreshadowing some aspect of the work of Christ or some vital phase of God's truth. Thus many features of the tabernacle and of the various services were intended to present a foreview of the Saviour's activity and to impress various phases of God's truth upon the hearts of

His people, sometimes even giving a hint of truths that were then only dimly understood.

In many biblical and theological discussions, some of them written from widely differing viewpoints, much is made of types and typology.

In the discussion of the book of Daniel typology plays a very minor role. Aside from chapters 8 and 11 it is rarely mentioned in connection with this book. Daniel 8 and a considerable portion of chapter 11 deal with Antiochus Epiphanes. A number of writers suggest that Antiochus is to be regarded as a type or "adumbration" of Antichrist, who is definitely predicted in Daniel 7 and in the latter part of Daniel 11.

Most discussions of typology insist that a type must have reference to something about Christ or about God's plan for salvation. A picture of Antichrist seems hardly to belong under such a heading.

Some writers desire to restrict the use of the word "type" to matters that are specifically designated as types in the Scripture. This obviously would not apply to Antiochus Epiphanes.

If one were simply to take recognizable similarities as indications that something is a type of something else the idea could readily be carried to absurdity. Thus it might be said that Adam was a type of Noah. Adam was the first man who lived on earth and was the progenitor of all subsequent human beings. Noah was the first head of a family after the flood and the progenitor of all subsequent human beings. Adam was directed to cultivate the plants in the Garden of Eden. Noah became a farmer and raised a vineyard. Adam came into serious difficulty when he ate the fruit of the tree. Noah came into serious difficulty as a result of drinking the product of his vineyard. Despite the many similarities, it would hardly be suggested that Adam was a type of Noah. It would be equally absurd to take Napoleon as a type of Hitler, though a still greater number of similarities in the character and careers of these two men could easily be pointed out.

A particularly strong objection to considering Antiochus

as a type of Antichrist is the fact that both are involved in predictions of events that would occur many centuries after the time the prediction was given. God enabled the prophet to look forward almost four centuries to see a great persecutor who would strongly oppose the religion of the Israelites, though a band of brave men would gain independence by fighting against him. This persecutor would die in relative obscurity far from the land of Israel, probably as a result of a nervous disease. God also enabled the prophet to look forward more than two thousand years to see a great persecutor who is to be destroyed by Christ at His coming. To consider an individual who would live long after Daniel's time as a type of a still later individual adds nothing to the understanding of Scripture, and can easily lead to great confusion. It is better to examine each passage carefully to determine where Daniel speaks of Antiochus and where he speaks of Antichrist. Although there are similarities between the two great persecutors, they are distinct figures and should not be confused.

### **Notes**

- <sup>^1</sup> Thus the statement sometimes made that the two legs represent the eastern and western Roman empires does not correspond to historical fact.
- <sup>^2</sup> D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, vol. 1, p. 246, Chicago, 1926.
- <sup>^3</sup> Many scholars think the events described by Isaiah occurred early in Sennacherib's reign, making the interval twenty years in length.





## **A Survey of the Briefer Predictions**

We have noticed that the book of Daniel naturally divides into two main sections, each of them including six chapters. The first section is largely historical, though its second chapter contains an important prophecy. The second section is devoted almost entirely to prophecy, except for statements about the situations in which the prophecies were given.

We shall now look at the short prophecies contained in the first half of the book. It is questionable whether there is any prediction in chapter 1, which tells how Daniel and his companions determined not to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. The only statement in the chapter that sounds at all like a prediction is found in verses 12-13. Daniel asked the chief official to allow him and his comrades to eat only vegetables and drink only water during a trial period of ten days, and then to compare their appearance with that of the other captives. Since Daniel evidently had faith that God would enable them to pass the test this might be considered as a prophecy. Yet Daniel does not clearly predict the result. His words should probably be understood simply as a statement of faith in God rather than as a prediction.

In chapter 6 we shall carefully examine Daniel 2, which is one of the great prophetic chapters of the Bible.

The third chapter of Daniel's book tells how his three friends refused to worship the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and describes the events that followed. There is

only one statement in this chapter that might seem to be a prediction. This is the declaration of Daniel's friends in verses 17-18: "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." The first half of the statement, if taken alone, might seem to be a prediction, but the last half contains the implication that God might choose to let them suffer for His sake instead of giving them physical deliverance.

Chapter 4 contains a remarkable prediction. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which Daniel interpreted as meaning that God would deprive the king of his greatness for a time and would make him live the life of an animal, but that eventually he would be restored to his sanity and given back his power. The chapter tells how the prophecy was literally fulfilled.

Chapter 5 contains a prophecy in an unusual form. A finger was seen writing on the wall. Belshazzar the king was greatly troubled because no one was able to interpret what was written. Eventually Daniel was called and he interpreted it as meaning that Belshazzar would be overthrown and his kingdom given to the Medes and Persians.<sup>1</sup> This prediction was literally fulfilled that very night.

Chapter 6 has only one statement that sounds like a prediction. By an appeal to the vanity of Darius the Mede<sup>2</sup>, Daniel's enemies persuaded the king to establish an arbitrary law, "in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be annulled" (vv. 8, 12). As a result, the king was soon forced, much against his will, to order that Daniel be put into the den of lions. When he did so he said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" (v. 16) Here the KJV reads: "Thy God, whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee."

While it might be suggested that Darius was led by God to make a divine prediction, it seems more likely that he merely expressed a hope. This interpretation is supported by the fact that after a sleepless night he went to the den

and called to Daniel saying, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" (v. 20).

### Notes

- <sup>^1</sup> In order to make all the prophecies point to the time Of Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes, those who support the Maccabean view must take the fourth kingdom as the kingdom of Greece rather than that of Rome and must therefore say that the unknown writer thought there had been a Median empire between the Babylonian and Persian empires. Yet the prediction in 5:28 that Belshazzar's kingdom would be "given to the Medes and Persians" shows that the writer of the book of Daniel did not have this erroneous idea; also note references to "the laws of the Medes and Persians" in Daniel 6:8, 12 and 15. 2
- <sup>^2</sup> Supporters of the Maccabean theory have said that the references to Darius the Mede (5:31 and 6:1-28; also 9:1 and 11:1) support their claim that the author of the book believed that there was a Median kingdom between the Babylonian and Persian empires. Yet there is no difficulty in considering that "Darius the Mede" was an officer whom Cyrus himself placed over the kingdom of Babylon. At that time the ruler of an area was often called a king, and Cyrus designated himself as "king of kings."

Further evidence that Darius may have been an officer under Cyrus is suggested by Dan. 5:31 where the KJV rendered the Aramaic *qabbel* as "took," though, when rendered precisely, it means "received." (Here the NIV renders it as "took over.") Despite the unsupported assertions of some commentators, *qabbel* is never used for taking something by force. Similarly Dan. 9:1 says that Darius "was made ruler" (literally, "was caused to rule").





## **Part II**

### ***Examination of the Major Predictive Chapters***

## **The Vision of the Great Image in Daniel 2**

The second chapter of Daniel contains the first long prophecy in the book. Since it is much simpler and far less detailed than the later prophecies it provides an excellent introduction to their study. Its principal features are presented in rather general terms and it is questionable how much information from later chapters or from the study of later history should be read back into them. It is better first to see what can be learned from this chapter, taken by itself, and then to use this knowledge as a foundation in approaching the later, more complicated visions.

The story in this chapter is well known. Nebuchadnezzar called upon his so-called "wise men" (or "Chaldeans") to describe to him a dream that he had had and then to interpret the dream. They all declared that such a demand was impossible, saying that if he would tell them the dream they would be glad to interpret it. In great anger the king commanded that all the "wise men" should be killed. Hearing of this order and knowing that their own lives were now in jeopardy, Daniel and his friends prayed that God would deliver them. Then he went before the king and correctly described the king's dream, and also gave the divine interpretation.

In ancient times belief in signs, omens and dreams as means of predicting the future was very widespread. The Babylonians thought they could predict the future by examining the entrails of sacrificial animals. Hundreds of clay tablets have been found describing the condition of the livers of animals that had been sacrificed just before some



important event occurred. Nebuchadnezzar himself used this form of divination in determining whether to attack Jerusalem (Ezek. 21:21).

In verses 5 and 8 the NIV quotes Nebuchadnezzar as saying, "this is what I have firmly decided." Here the KJV, following the Vulgate and the Septuagint, says "the thing is gone from me," a rendering that has led many readers to think that Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten his dream. Careful examination of the original Aramaic supports the idea expressed by the NIV rendering. *Milleta* means "word," "statement," or "command." *'Azd'a* occurs nowhere else in the Bible and for a long time its meaning could only be guessed. It is now generally thought that it does not mean "has gone," but is a Persian loan word meaning "firm." A literal translation of Nebuchadnezzar's words would be "the command from me is firm."

The king's demand that the "wise men" interpret his dream without first being informed of its content might seem like the arbitrary action of a tyrant. Yet in view of the circumstances it can be easily understood. Probably there had been other times when Nebuchadnezzar had asked his Chaldeans to interpret a dream. A clever man can easily think of a dozen possible meanings for any symbolic or unusual dream. When a "wise man" heard the content of one of the king's dreams it would not be difficult for him to think of a suggested interpretation that would flatter the king and might result in a valuable gift or a special honor (cf. Dan. 2:48). If Nebuchadnezzar had previously heard many clever interpretations of dreams, some of them including predictions that proved to be wrong, he may have become suspicious and therefore have decided to test the ability of the "wise men" by demanding not only that they interpret the dream, but that they first tell him what the dream had been. If so this order was not simply the arbitrary action of a tyrant, but rather a decision made by one who felt that he had been deceived too often. When the king found that the Chaldeans were unwilling to attempt to meet this challenge of their claim to great wisdom, he was furious and commanded that they all be destroyed.

The chapter tells how Daniel and his friends prayed that God would deliver them, and how God answered their prayer by revealing Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel and using it as a means of informing the Lord's people about the divine plan for the future.

In ordinary life dreaming is a common phenomenon. Modern researches have shown that dreams are universal and in fact are necessary to psychical well-being. The naturalness of dreaming is recognized in the Old Testament in such references as Isaiah 29:8, Job 20:8, Psalm 73:20 and Ecclesiastes 5:7.

Warnings against being misled by dreams are contained in Deuteronomy 13:1-3, Jeremiah 27:9; 29:8 and Zechariah 10:2. Even aside from the possibility that a dream might be produced by a demonic spirit there is always a grave danger that God's people may be confused by attaching a wrong importance to them. God has placed in the Scripture all the guidance that His people need for conducting their lives. In the years before He had given the full revelation that He intended to have preserved in the Bible as the guide for His people He occasionally used a dream as a means of expressing His will. Sometimes He chose to give His people direct messages through dreams, as in Genesis 20:3, 6-7; 31:24; 1 Kings 3:5ff; Matthew 1:20; 2:12. Occasionally the Lord chose to give a dream in which truths were presented in symbolic form. Sometimes such dreams were given to men who did not know Him, as in the case of Pharaoh's baker and butler (Gen. 40:5-22), of Pharaoh himself (Gen. 41:1-32), of the Midianites (Jud. 7:13-15) and of Nebuchadnezzar as described in this chapter.

After the wise men had failed, God revealed the content of the dream to Daniel and also its interpretation. Daniel described to Nebuchadnezzar the statue of which the king had dreamed and pointed out that it represented a progression from the head downward.

### **The Dream and Its Interpretation**

(31) "You looked, O king, and there before you

stood a large statue -- an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. (32) The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, (33) its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. (34) While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. (35) Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

(36) "This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. (37) You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; (38) 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.

(39) "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. (40) Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron -- for iron breaks and smashes everything -- and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. (41) Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. (42) As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. (43) And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay,

so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

(44) "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. (45) This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands -- a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

"The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

The vision and the interpretation divide naturally into three parts: (1) the prediction of four kingdoms (vv. 31-33, 37-40); (2) the peculiar nature of the second part of the fourth kingdom (vv. 33b, 41-43); (3) the complete destruction of the human kingdoms and their replacement by God's new regime (vv. 34-35, 44-45).

We shall examine these sections in order, looking in each case at both the vision and the interpretation.

### **The Four Kingdoms**

Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar: "You are that head of gold. After you, another kingdom will rise" (vv. 38-39). When Nebuchadnezzar died the second great empire did not immediately assume control. Several comparatively weak kings ruled in Babylon before the Babylonian empire was overcome by the Persians. In view of this fact, and also of the fact that the other parts of the statue represent kingdoms rather than individual kings, it is reasonable to consider that here Nebuchadnezzar represents the entire period of supremacy of Babylonian and Assyrian military

power, which came to an end when the Persian king, Cyrus, conquered Babylon, about 22 years after Nebuchadnezzar's death.

In the preliminary discussion of symbolism (pp. 41ff) we saw that the detailed features of the statue do not yield additional information, beyond the fact that there would be a succession of four great empires. We did not at that point give particular attention to the various metals of which the image was composed. The interpretation includes statements about the meaning of the iron and of the mixture of iron and clay, but says nothing about any specific meaning for the gold, the silver, or the bronze. Attempts have been made to relate these three metals specifically to the history of the three empires that they represent but such attempts are purely fanciful. There is no reason why silver should be considered more characteristic of the Persian kingdom than of that of Nebuchadnezzar or of Greece, and gold or bronze could properly characterize any one of the three. The use of three different metals to represent the first three kingdoms showed that there would be great differences between them, but the particular metals did not indicate distinguishing characteristics of these kingdoms.

Some interpreters say that the decreasing value of the metals indicates that each of the last three kingdoms would be in some way inferior to those that preceded it. Such an interpretation is quite natural, in view of the usual rendering of a statement in verse 39: "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours." However, there is no solid basis for rendering this word as "inferior," since it is simply the Aramaic word for earth, with an ending to indicate direction. Literally the word means "toward the earth," or "lower down." There is no known instance where this word is used in Aramaic literature or inscriptions to mean "less valuable," but there are a number of occurrences where it clearly means "lower down". Thus it is used in the ancient Aramaic translation ("targum") of Genesis 6:16 to indicate the lower decks of the ark.

When Nebuchadnezzar heard that he was represented by the head of gold and that there was to be another kingdom,

lower down, he may perhaps have thought that this meant that the following kingdom would be inferior to his, when really it only meant that the following regime was represented by a lower part of the statue.

Building on the word "inferior" and on the apparent decrease in the value of the metals, some commentators have tried to show that there was a decrease in the value of the four kingdoms, each being in some way inferior to the preceding one. But the facts of history do not fit any of these efforts. The Persian empire, which succeeded the Neo-Babylonian empire, controlled at least three times as large an area and had at least twice as many people as were included in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom. Cyrus and his successors were able to levy tremendous armies that would march hundreds of miles to do their bidding. Toward the end of his life Nebuchadnezzar had attacked Egypt and had overrun a considerable portion of it, but had failed to retain control. Cyrus' son, Cambyses, conquered Egypt and the Persians held it for a hundred years. Then Egypt revolted and was independent for 90 years, but ten years before the end of the Persian empire Egypt was reconquered. Not only the extent but also the power of the Persian empire was greater than that of the Neo-Babylonian empire.

The third empire, established by Alexander of Macedon, included the entire Persian empire, plus Greece and Macedonia. The power of Alexander was so great that he completely subdued this mighty empire during his short reign of twelve years -- an empire that was still very strong at the time of its destruction, a fact illustrated by its reconquest of Egypt only ten years earlier.

The Roman empire, represented by the legs and the feet, included large areas in Europe and North Africa that were never part of the third empire. Although more than half the area of the Persian empire, including part of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom, was not included in the Roman empire, the entire area controlled by the Romans was at least as large as that held by any of the preceding kingdoms. The power of Rome was very great, as was symbolized by the iron.

Since the four kingdoms do not show a downward progression in extent or power, the theory has been advanced that there is a downward progression in some other aspect, such as the authority of the king. According to this idea, the power of the Babylonian king over his subjects was absolute and unlimited, with each succeeding kingdom showing a decrease in this regard. It is highly questionable whether such a criterion would justify the idea that the successive metals indicate a decreasing value of the four empires. In any case, such a decrease is simply not a fact. The power of the Babylonian king was really far from absolute. Hundreds of clay tablets from the time of Nebuchadnezzar have been excavated, containing contracts and other arrangements made by private citizens during his reign. Many centuries before the time of Nebuchadnezzar, Hammurabi, one of the greatest of Babylonian kings, had erected a monument containing a detailed and extensive code of laws. In its preamble he declared that these laws had been given him by the sun god, and that he was displaying them so that every person should be able to read the laws and know his rights. This and other evidence shows clearly that the Babylonian kings were far from being absolute rulers, though their power was very great.

The same is true of the Persian rulers. The book of Esther describes King Ahasuerus as simply making an edict on his own motion that would turn over the Jews to be destroyed by the peoples among whom they lived (Est. 3:11-15). This would seem to be a sign of absolute power. Yet once the date for this purge had been set there was no way that the king could change it (Est. 8:8, cf. Dan. 6:15). All he could do was to make a counteracting law, giving the Jews the right to defend themselves, and providing them with some help for this purpose. The Persian empire may have been slightly more totalitarian than the Babylonian or slightly less, but there is certainly no sign of decreasing value in this regard.

A few years after the death of Alexander, the Greek empire had become divided into three main parts and a number of smaller sections, all of them characterized by the

dominance of Greek culture. These areas had rulers who exerted a considerable amount of absolute power. Historical evidence does not show any characteristic difference among the four empires with regard to the power of their rulers.

It is quite evident that the four metals do not represent descending value or descending importance. The first three metals simply indicate the fact that there would be very great differences between these empires, and indeed there were as regards language, culture, and ways of handling many aspects of government.

There is no special significance to the particular metal used to indicate each of the first three empires. The case of the fourth empire is different. There it is stated that the iron has a specific meaning (v. 40), and also that the mixture of iron and clay in the feet has a specific meaning (v. 41).

Thus the first part of Nebuchadnezzar's vision consisted of a prediction that four powerful regimes, of which the first was already in existence, would rise successively to power, and that the fourth would be extremely strong and very destructive.

## **The Second Part of the Dream**

### **The Fourth Kingdom to Have a Distinctive Second Phase**

Up to this point each part of the statue was represented as composed entirely of one metal. Now it is revealed that the fourth kingdom will have a second phase, quite different from its first part. It is declared that the feet of the statue were "partly of iron and partly of baked clay" (2:33b). The interpretation devotes three verses to the meaning of this change:

(41) Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay.

(42) As the toes were partly iron and



partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. (43) And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

Those who hold the Maccabean view claim that these verses describe the Greek kingdom after the death of Alexander the Great, when it was broken up among his various generals. From this viewpoint the first phase of the fourth kingdom would be hardly more than twenty years in length, with the second phase more than eight times as long. It seems more realistic to consider the fourth kingdom as representing the Roman empire, which exerted great strength for several centuries before entering a period of very severe decline.

Although the passage includes a number of statements about this second phase of the fourth empire, much is left unexplained. Various attempts have been made to determine what is meant by the mixture of iron and clay. Some of the suggested meanings could apply just as well (or even better) to the period of decline of the first kingdom or of the third. Some could apply almost as well to the early history of the Roman empire as to its latter days.

The most obvious suggestion is that the mixture of iron and clay represents an intermixture of various peoples or nations. While this is probably part of the meaning, it can hardly be all that is involved. Such intermixture was already a characteristic of the Babylonian empire, for it was then a regular practice to compel the people of ability in a conquered nation to migrate to a distant region. At the same time the people of ability and leadership in that second area might be forced to migrate to a third region. This procedure was begun by the Assyrians and continued by the Babylonians. The resulting type of mixture is described in some detail in 2 Kings 17:24ff.

Although Cyrus gave the various peoples permission to return to their homelands, many had become established in the regions to which they had been carried and chose to

remain there. This was true of the Jews, the majority of whom did not join the group that returned in 538 B.C., or the later one that returned with Ezra in 458 B.C. This condition of intermixture, established during the first kingdom and largely continued during the second kingdom, was greatly increased at the beginning of the third kingdom, since Alexander the Great desired to join the Persian and Greek peoples into one nation. He himself married a Persian princess and induced hundreds of his associates to take a similar step.

In the early days of the fourth kingdom one of the factors that enabled Rome to become strong was its ability to assimilate conquered peoples, so that its power was not entirely dependent on the few who could claim descent from the ancient Romans. Intermixture of nations was distinctive of the Roman empire all through its history, though it became far more pronounced when barbarian invaders entered its territory in large numbers after its power declined. Since intermixture of peoples was common in all four kingdoms it can hardly by itself be the new feature of this second phase of the fourth kingdom, though it must certainly be an important part of the situation at that time.

A second suggested interpretation is that these words point to intermarriage between rulers of different kingdoms. This also would not be at all new. Babylonian rulers frequently intermarried with ruling families of other regions. The very foundation of the second kingdom involved intermarriage between the ruling families of the Persians and the Medes. During the third kingdom intermarriage between rulers of different sections was very common. Intermarriage between ruling families can hardly be taken as the distinctive feature of the second phase of the fourth kingdom.

A third suggestion has been made in recent years, that the introduction of miry clay between the parts of the iron represents the rise of democracy, weakening the former monarchical structure.

This interpretation must be considered as highly questionable. While democracy has been greatly extended in the modern world, it was by no means unknown in ancient

times. Although some of the Greek cities had frequent changes of government, some of which involved periods of despotism, democracy was the most frequent type of government in many of them. During much of the history of Athens all its citizens had equal rights, and any citizen could be elected to high office. (It is true that this was restricted to citizens. There were great numbers of slaves in all the ancient civilizations).

At a very early time Rome became a democracy and developed an extensive system of popular government. It was while this system of popular government was a reality that the Roman state made most of its great conquests. Even after Augustus established the system that has generally been called "the Roman empire," he strictly maintained the forms of democracy, and these forms continued to be scrupulously observed until A.D. 284, when Diocletian became emperor. During the very period when the Roman power could be most truly characterized as crushing and destroying like iron, democracy was its type of government. By the time that democracy had largely become a mere form in Rome, the Roman empire had completed most of its conquests, and had absorbed the various parts of the third kingdom.

In view of these facts it would seem very unlikely that the insertion of clay into the feet and toes of the image could represent the rise of democracy.

While intermixture of peoples may be an important factor, the language of the passage suggests that there may be other factors of equal importance that have not been revealed.

During the years from A.D. 400-600 Rome's internal strength declined greatly and its territory was successfully invaded by a number of wandering tribes. Some historians consider this to be the end of the Roman empire and it has even been suggested that it might be the period represented by the feet and toes of the image. Yet the interpretation clearly stated that during that period the kingdom would have in it the strength of iron as well as the brittleness of baked clay. It is hard to find evidence of strength in the

Roman empire between A.D. 400 and 600. Violence and brutality existed in great amount, but mostly on the part of the invading tribes rather than of the weakened Roman empire.

### **The Third Part of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (2:34-35, 44-45)**

The third part of Nebuchadnezzar's dream differed from its earlier parts in that it was dynamic rather than static. The first two parts merely described a statue made of various materials arranged in an unusual way. Without the interpretation we would have no way of knowing that this statue represented a continuing series of events. Now, however, things began to move. While Nebuchadnezzar was looking, he saw a stone that was cut out of a mountain without hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them, so that all the various materials of the statue were mixed together and completely pulverized, becoming like tiny bits of grain, and then were carried away by the wind so that not a trace of them remained. But the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

The interpretation of this part of the dream is rather brief. Daniel said that through this dream God had made known to Nebuchadnezzar what would take place in the future. He said that in the days of these kings the God of heaven would set up a kingdom that would never be destroyed, and that this kingdom would not be left for another people (v. 44); it would crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but would itself endure forever.

This dynamic change was not to occur until long after Daniel's time, since Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom and each of the three subsequent ones must first run its course. This is graphically represented by the fact that the stone strikes the image on its feet. If one desires to knock over a statue and destroy it, he might aim his blow at its head, its chest, or its legs, but it would hardly be natural to throw a rock at its feet. Under the natural principle that statements that are quite different from what would normally be expected are

to be understood as having special significance, the statement in verse 34 that the stone "struck the statue on its feet that were of iron and clay" suggests very strongly that the striking of the image by the stone represents an event that would not occur until the second phase of the fourth kingdom.

This dynamic portion of the dream consists of three events that are described in order. These three events are: (1) the origin of the stone (v. 34a); (2) the destruction of the statue (vv. 34b-35b); (3) the growth of the stone (v. 35c). The interpretation of the three events follows a somewhat different order. It begins with a general statement (44a-b) possibly covering the whole section but specifically dealing with the first and third events. This is followed by a more detailed statement about the second event (44c), and then by statements about the first and second events (45a-b). A considerable part of the interpretation is devoted to repetition of parts of the dream rather than to a clear explanation of their meaning, and the second event is particularly emphasized. The arrangement is illustrated graphically in the following chart:

THE THIRD PART OF THE DREAM	THE INTERPRETATION
<p>Event 1: <i>the origin of the rock</i></p> <p>(34a) While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands.</p>	<p>Events 1 and 3:</p> <p>(44a-b) In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people.</p>
<p>Event 2: <i>the destruction of the statue</i></p> <p>(34b) It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them.</p> <p>(35) Then the iron, the</p>	<p>Events 2 and 3:</p> <p>(44c) It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an</p>

<p>clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace.</p> <p>Event 3: the growth of the rock</p> <p>(35c) But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.</p>	<p>end, (44d) but it will itself endure forever.</p> <p>Events 1 and 2:</p> <p>(45) This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands -- a rock that broke iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.</p>
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Certain features are stressed both in the description of these events and in the interpretation. The first event emphasizes divine origination. The rock was "cut out, but not by human hands" (v. 34a, 45a). The interpretation says that "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom" (v. 44a). These statements indicate a supernatural event. It has been suggested that they point to the virgin birth of Christ, but so specific an application seems unwarranted.<sup>2</sup> The simple fact is clearly indicated that a great change will be produced by divine action without human involvement.

The second event involves the complete destruction of the statue. Every part of it is to be broken into tiny pieces and blown away (vv. 34b-35, 44c, 45b). This would seem to mean the complete eradication of all the elements of wicked human government as it previously existed. There is no amalgamation between the rock and any elements of the statue. Anything that incorporates important features of the statue can hardly be considered as a fulfillment of this prediction.

The third event is the growth of the rock, so that it becomes a huge mountain and fills the whole earth (v. 35c). The new situation is to be universal in extent. The interpretation adds to the feature of universality that of permanence: the new kingdom will never be destroyed (v. 44d).

The most obvious interpretation of the picture would seem to be that it represents a sudden cataclysmic event: a divine force suddenly attacks the statue, utterly destroys it and replaces it by a completely different type of kingdom. If taken this way it points to the second advent of Christ and reminds us of Paul's prediction of a time when "the Lord Jesus will overthrow [the lawless one] with the breath of His mouth and destroy [him] by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thes. 2:8). If this is what is meant the whole series of dynamic events involved in this third part of the dream is still future.

A number of commentaries suggest a different interpretation.<sup>3</sup> They consider the picture to be greatly condensed. In their opinion what is predicted is not a sudden catastrophic change but rather a development in which the rock grows slowly and overcomes the statue gradually so that eventually the rock will fill the whole earth and the statue will completely disappear. Since prophecy is often foreshortened this possibility deserves careful consideration.

Thus, so far as the present vision is concerned, two interpretations are suggested, each beginning with a situation in which wicked human government controls most of the world and each ending with a situation in which every trace of such government has disappeared and the beneficent kingdom that God will set up in its place will fill the whole earth.

It should be noted that in either case a great part of what is predicted is still future. In the one case it looks to a great cataclysmic sudden future event. In the other it looks to a gradual development that eventually produces the same result. In both cases it reaches to the complete end of wicked human government.

Some treatments of this dynamic section might give the impression that the prediction is limited to the first coming of Christ and the beginning of His church. Such an impression can be ruled out immediately. Not only do those who think that it describes the cataclysmic events connected with the return of Christ consider that the chapter reaches to the very end of the age, those who hold that the rock

represents the Christian church also recognize that the process it describes will not be complete until the very end of all wicked human government. Since this is a point of considerable importance, we shall quote the statements of several writers, including a number who consider the rock to represent the growth of the Christian church.

Thus O. T. Allis says, "This kingdom was set up 1900 years ago in the days of the Caesars by Jesus and His apostles, and has been growing and spreading ever since Its task is to subdue and overthrow all other kingdoms and it shall itself endure for ever. Thus interpreted, we have here a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ with primary reference to its establishment and growth."<sup>4</sup>

E. J. Young says, "The kingdom of God will completely triumph, and the kingdom of men (as represented by the image) will be completely destroyed."<sup>5</sup>

Patrick Fairbairn says of the prophecy in Daniel 2 that it "points also to the future; inasmuch as it declares the absolute universality of Messiah's authority and rule among men, His unlimited and everlasting sway. This is yet far from having been established: while the stone has broken in pieces the image, which sought to pre-occupy the entire ground, it has not yet itself grown so as to fill the whole earth. "<sup>6</sup>

H. C. Leupold says: "There shall never be a time when the kingdom of God has to bow to the authority of another. It shall, in fact, be a force that will be operative in the overthrow of all the kingdoms that the world produces. "<sup>7</sup>

Lange's Commentary says, "This closing scene of the vision is in the course of being steadily and increasingly fulfilled, inasmuch as, on the one hand, the destruction and dissolution of the world-powers, and on the other, the growth of the stone into a mighty mountain that fills the whole earth, are yet far from their Divinely appointed goal."<sup>8</sup>

Ellicott's Commentary says, "The stone is now rolling, as the kingdom of God spreads further and further day by day. The image is still standing, the stone has not yet fallen upon it..."<sup>9</sup>



The commentary on Daniel in *The Anchor Bible* says, "Just as the mysterious stone that smashed the tile feet of the statue caused the whole statue to tumble down and be reduced to dust, which the wind carried away, while the stone itself grew into a mountain that filled the whole earth, so the God of Israel will annihilate the kingdoms of men and in their place establish his own universal kingdom. "<sup>10</sup>

The picture in Daniel greatly stresses the completeness of the statue's destruction and the universality of the new regime. If this is to be brought about by a continuing gradual growth of the Christian church, or even by a far more rapid growth, the greater part of this growth would have to be considered as still future.

A large portion of the world is today under the control of brutal God-denying tyrannies. In much of the rest the evil practices of the Roman empire pervade the governing system. Even in the most enlightened countries graft and corruption are often found in governmental circles. If the dynamic phase of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is to be taken as a true representation of what must occur, it requires, at the very least, a complete change in most of the governmental systems of the world and the establishment of universal righteousness and peace.

### **The Problem of Perspective**

Whether the third phase is thought of as representing the growth and complete victory of the Christian church or as picturing a great change to be brought about by the return of Christ, in either case the interpreter of Daniel 2 faces a problem. If the latter view is taken these events have not yet occurred. If the former is taken, they have already been in progress for nearly 2000 years but the greater part of what they represent is still ahead, since they involve the complete destruction of all ungodly human government. Yet the rock is said to strike the statue upon its feet, which represent the second phase of the fourth kingdom -- the Roman empire. In view of the many centuries that have elapsed since a Roman emperor could claim effective control over a large

portion of the known world, it is necessary to consider how this long period can fit with the predictions of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Three possible solutions should be mentioned.

The first is to think of the second phase as beginning about A.D. 400 and continuing to the end of the time pictured by the statue. This would require a tremendous foreshortening. Even if the dynamic events were to end in the very near future, what is represented by the feet would be several times as long as all the other parts of the statue put together. While it is possible for a prophet, as he looks forward into the future, to see long periods so telescoped that they appear short, this solution would seem to require an extreme disproportion in the parts of the statue.

A second possibility would be to consider the legs of the statue as reaching from the foundation of the Roman empire to the present time, with the period represented by the feet either now in progress or still future. In this case the required foreshortening would be proportionately far less than if the first suggestion were taken. This suggestion is not as unlikely as it might seem at first sight. Some of the barbarian tribes that overran the Roman Empire claimed to be representing the Roman emperor in Constantinople, and in their forms and practices they took over much that was characteristic of ancient Rome. Roman culture and terminology have continued to exert great influence in most of Europe and even in North and South America. Even within the present century Latin terms and expressions have played a large part in the practices of our law courts and in the usages of many churches.

A third possibility is to consider that there is a long unmentioned interval<sup>11</sup> between the period represented by the legs and that represented by the feet. Since there are many such unmentioned intervals in the various prophecies contained in the Book of Daniel this must be regarded as a definite possibility.

Nebuchadnezzar's vision provided a general summary of vital features of God's plan. It particularly stressed the eventual destruction of all wicked human government and

its replacement by the universal kingdom that God will set up. We can reasonably expect that our examination of the visions that Daniel himself received more than fifty years later will add further detail to many aspects of the picture that appears in broad strokes in chapter 2.

### Notes

- <sup>^1</sup> See discussion in Keil, p. 91 and Montgomery, pp. 147-8.
- <sup>^2</sup> If similarity of detail should be required, comparison with the event pictured in Dan. 7:13-14 might be a better suggestion.
- <sup>^3</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Book of Daniel* (New York: Leavitt and Allen Bros., 1853), p. 135. H. Dean on "Daniel" in *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Zondervan reprint, 1959), Vol. 5, p. 367. Prof. Zockler on "Daniel" in *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scripture* (New York: Chas. Scribner's, 1876; Zondervan reprint, 1960), p. 87. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (The Wartburg Press, 1949; Baker Book House reprint, 1969), pp. 123-125. C. F. Keil, on "Daniel" in *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans reprint, 1973), Vol. 9, p. 271.
- <sup>^4</sup> O. T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1945), pp. 123-124.
- <sup>^5</sup> E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 79.
- <sup>^6</sup> Patrick Fairbairn, *Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 2nd ed., 1865), p. 300.
- <sup>^7</sup> H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (The Wartburg Press, 1949; Baker Book House reprint, 1969), p. 124.
- <sup>^8</sup> Prof. Zockler on "Daniel" in *Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scripture* (New York: Chas. Scribner's, 1876; Zondervan reprint, 1960), p. 87.
- <sup>^9</sup> H. Deane on "Daniel" in *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Zondervan reprint, 1959), p. 367.
- <sup>^10</sup> Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel: The Anchor Bible*, vol. 23 (New York: Doubleday, 1977), p.149.
- <sup>^11</sup> See pp. 47-50.

## **The Vision of the Four Beasts in Daniel 7**

Many years after Nebuchadnezzar had the dream described in chapter 2 Daniel himself had one that was like it in some respects, though using entirely different imagery.

The chapter begins with the statement that Daniel received this vision in the first year of Belshazzar. A century ago there were those who thought that Belshazzar was a mythical figure. Then proof was found that he was a real king of Babylon though he did not reign alone but as an associate of his father Nabonidus. During the latter part of the reign of Nabonidus both men were recognized as kings of Babylon, with Nabonidus living in retirement at Tema in Arabia, while Belshazzar ran the government and directed the army. <sup>^1</sup>

Since Nabonidus himself did not become king until 556 B.C. more than forty years must have passed between the time when Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream in that king's second year and the time when he received the vision described in this chapter. Like the dream in chapter 2, this vision would be extremely difficult to understand if we did not have the divine interpretation, which in this case is included as an integral part of the vision.

Unlike the vision described and interpreted in chapter 2, the events in this dream are not fully described in the order of their occurrence, with the interpretation given as a separate unit. In this chapter the symbolic dream is first described in considerable detail (vv. 2-14). Then there is a very brief interpretation (vv. 17-18). This leaves Daniel

unsatisfied, and he asks for more information about the meaning of the dream. In the course of this request he recapitulates parts of the vision, adding details that the first account had not included. As the structure of the chapter is rather complicated we shall summarize it briefly before discussing it in detail.

Daniel's vision begins with a picture of four great beasts coming out of the sea (vv. 1-7). This is followed by a description of strange events to occur during the latter part of the time of the fourth beast (v. 8). After Daniel has heard the blasphemies of the "little horn," his eyes are directed toward a heavenly scene (vv. 9-10), and he is comforted by seeing a symbolic representation of the great power and majesty of the almighty God. Realizing that the problem raised by the horn's blasphemies must be worked out, his attention reverts to the earthly scene, and he sees the fourth beast utterly destroyed and its body consumed by fire (v. 11). In verses 13-14 he sees the heavenly forces taking over control of the earth as one like a son of man comes with the clouds of heaven and receives an indestructible dominion.

Thus far there is much similarity to the structure of the vision in chapter 2. The four beasts would correspond to the four divisions of the statue. The rise of the little horn would correspond to the changed condition in the second phase of the fourth kingdom. The complete destruction of the fourth beast would correspond to the account of the stone striking the image and utterly demolishing it. Verse 14 describes the establishment of a new universal and indestructible kingdom in language very similar to that of Daniel 2:44.

Next Daniel tells how, while still in the vision, he asked a bystander to explain its meaning (v. 16). Instead of a detailed explanation, like the interpretation that Daniel gave Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 2, the bystander merely gave a brief summary of its meaning (vv. 17-18), ending with a statement very similar to those in 7:14 and 2:44.

Not satisfied with this brief summary, Daniel asked for further information about the latter part of the vision. While

making this request he recapitulated its content, adding some details not previously mentioned (vv. 19-22). In answer the bystander gave a somewhat more detailed interpretation of the latter part of the vision (vv. 23-27).

### **The First Part of the Vision**

(1) In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions passed through his mind as he was lying on his bed. He wrote down the substance of his dream. (2) Daniel said: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea. (3) Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea. (4) The first was like a lion, and it had the wings of an eagle. I watched until its wings were torn off and it was lifted from the ground so that it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it. (5) And there before me was a second beast, which looked like a bear. It was raised up on one of its sides, and it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was told, 'Get up and eat your fill of flesh!' (6) After that, I looked and there before me was another beast, one that looked, like a leopard. And on its back it had four wings like those of a bird. This beast had four heads, and it was given authority to rule. (7) After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast -- terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns."

The interpretation of this part of the vision is summarized in verse 17: "The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth."

The vision begins with the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea, a picture that would naturally suggest great cataclysms and upheavals in the world. Then he sees four beasts come out of the sea. These beasts are definitely symbolic, for one would never expect a lion, a bear and a leopard to come out of the sea. The final terrible beast, which is not specified by name, has ten horns, something that one would never expect in real life.

We are not told whether the four beasts came up one after another or simultaneously. There are two reasons for deciding that they followed one another: (1) the close parallel with the four kingdoms in chapter 2, which are presented as succeeding one another; (2) the fact that such a succession of four kingdoms agrees with the history of the following centuries.

As in the case of the metals in chapter 2, the designations of the first three beasts differ from one another, but do not in themselves shed light on the differences between these kingdoms. Any one of the first three kingdoms predicted in chapter 2 -- the Babylonian, Persian and Greek empires -- could reasonably be compared to a lion, a bear, or a leopard. These are powerful and destructive beasts and all these kingdoms would be strong and aggressive. Yet this vision, unlike chapter 2, includes a small amount of additional information about each of them.

The first beast was like a lion with eagle's wings. Since figures of lions and winged creatures often occur in the monuments erected by Assyrian and Babylonian rulers, this is a very good representation for Nebuchadnezzar's empire, though it would probably fit the character of either the second or third kingdom equally well. Although Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is the center of attention, the lion probably represents the whole first period of empire, thus also including the Assyrian empire with its many conquests, especially since some of the Assyrian kings actually held a much larger territory under their control than Nebuchadnezzar did. This interpretation seems very probable in view of the great cultural and linguistic continuity involved.<sup>2</sup>

Verse 4 can easily be misinterpreted. At first sight it seems to be a picture of the destruction of the Babylonian empire. The words, "I watched until its wings were torn off," clearly point to a catastrophe, but the remainder of the verse gives a very different impression. To lift up an animal from the earth, make it stand on two feet like a man, and give it a man's heart sounds like a step forward rather than like a catastrophe. The sentence begins with a bad setback, but then pictures a great improvement. There was no national event in the closing days of the Babylonian empire that would fit this scenario. Besides, as the accounts of the four beasts continue, nothing is said about an end of the second or third beast until after the terrible picture of the destruction of the fourth beast. To find an event in the history of the Babylonian empire that corresponds to this account we must look, not at the final days of that empire, but at the career of its greatest ruler, the one who was told at the very beginning of Daniel's prophetic career: "You are that head of gold" (Dan. 2:38). Daniel 4 tells of a remarkable event, when it might truly be said that Nebuchadnezzar's "wings were torn off" as he lost his power and sanity and groveled on the earth for a time, but was then raised up and restored to his former greatness (Dan. 4:9-34; 5:18-21). Thus reference to an event that had already occurred would give Daniel assurance that the rest of the prophecy would also be fulfilled. It also provides further reason to believe that the first animal represents the kingdom ruled over by Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 5 says that the second beast, which was like a bear, was raised up on one side and had three ribs between its teeth, and that it was told to "eat your fill of flesh." The statement about being raised up on one side may have reference to the fact that in the Medo-Persian empire the Persian portion was becoming dominant over that of the Medes. The latter part of the statement, with its picture of increasing aggression, could apply to many widely separated events in world history. Thus it could describe the conquests of the Assyrians and Babylonians; it would fit the conquests of Alexander the Great even better than those of



the Persians; it could apply to many periods of Roman history. Yet it would be particularly appropriate for the early days of the Medo-Persian empire; its founder, Cyrus, made great conquests in the years that immediately followed the time when Daniel received this vision. When Daniel would hear about these rapid conquests, as Cyrus subdued one nation after another, he would see how precisely these developing events correspond to this part of the vision, and this would give him increased confidence that its later portions were a true picture of God's plan for the future.

This description of Persian power as it would soon appear to Daniel, and also the reference to Nebuchadnezzar's insanity in verse 4, were incidental points included in the vision to give assurance that the following predictions would also be fulfilled.

The three ribs in the mouth of the bear are sometimes said to be Lydia, Babylonia, and Egypt. Cyrus conquered Lydia and Babylonia and many other areas. Egypt was not conquered until the time of his son, Cambyses. Probably the three ribs merely represent an indefinite number of conquered areas.

Little is said about the third animal -- a leopard with four wings and four heads. The occurrence of similar features in symbolic predictions of the Greek empire in later chapters (cf. 8:8, 22; 11:4) suggests an important difference between the Greek kingdom and its predecessors. Very soon after this kingdom was founded it became divided into several sections, each completely independent of the others, yet all so similar in their type of organization, their culture, and the racial makeup of their leadership as to justify their being pictured as one kingdom.

As in Nebuchadnezzar's dream the fourth empire is singled out for special notice. There the fourth kingdom was said to be very strong, like iron that "breaks and smashes everything" (2:40). Here the unnamed fourth animal is called a terrifying and frightening beast with large iron teeth, that "crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left". This is exactly the way the Roman state must have appeared to the people in western

Asia during a number of centuries, as it conquered nation after nation. The second and third kingdoms made great conquests in their early years, but very few in later times, while the Roman state carried on for several centuries a successful career of continuing conquest.

Verse 7 ends with the statement: "it had ten horns." We know of no distinctive feature of Rome, "the city on seven hills," that would normally be typified by ten horns. Later statements strongly suggest that these ten horns<sup>4</sup> do not represent an original characteristic of this fourth kingdom, but a changed situation that would occur during its second phase.

### **The Second Part of the Vision**

(8) "While I was thinking about the horns, there before me was another horn, a little one, which came up among them; and three of the first horns were uprooted before it. This horn had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully."

This brief account of the second phase of the fourth kingdom is amplified later in the chapter. Here attention is directed not so much to the general nature of the fourth kingdom at this period as to a striking development within it - the rise of the little horn.

The picture of the little horn is not developed very fully at this point. This first account of the vision says only that three of the ten horns were uprooted before it, and that it "had eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth that spoke boastfully." In the context there is no doubt that boasts and blasphemies are involved, though the Aramaic words simply mean "great words" or "great things." Further accounts of the evil activity of the little horn are found in verses 20-21 and 24-25.

## The Third part of the Vision

### 1. The Heavenly Scene

(9) "As I looked, thrones were set in place\*, and the Ancient of Days took his seat.\* His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. (10) A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated,\* and the books were opened."

There is a striking change of scene between verses 8 and 9. The pictures that follow (vv. 9-14) are so interesting and vivid that it is easy to overlook the structure of the passage. These six verses correspond to the three events in the dynamic portion of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (2:34-35, 44-45).

In verses 9-10 Daniel's vision of the terrible events on earth is interrupted for a time by a vision of God's power and glory. His eyes turn away from the terrible earthly events to see what is happening in heaven, the only source from which deliverance can come.

Daniel sees a symbolic representation of the great Creator, designated by the term "the Ancient of Days." This term stresses God's eternity, in contrast to the finiteness of the great earthly powers.

The purity and righteousness of God are symbolized by His clothing, white as snow, and His hair, white like wool.

God's power is shown as dynamic and active. His throne is "flaming with fire." Its wheels are "all ablaze." A river of fire flows from before Him. Thousands of thousands attend Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him

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*\*See the Excursus on pp. 106-109 for discussion of KJV readings at these points.*

ready to do His bidding. This representation of the power of God corresponds to the emphasis on the supernatural origin of the stone in chapter 2. This emphasis appears again in verses 13-14 where "one like a son of man" is brought into the presence of the Ancient of Days, and given glory and sovereign power so that "all peoples, nations and men of every language should worship Him."

There has been considerable discussion about the use of a plural noun and a plural verb in the statement "thrones were set in place" (v. 9). John Calvin wrote: "Thrones were created for the Almighty to sit on with his councillors; not implying His need of any council, but of His own good will and mere favor He dignifies angels with this honor."<sup>6</sup> Yet none of the proposed explanations, not even that of Calvin, really gives sufficient reason for the use of this plural noun. I feel that it would be altogether proper here, as in a number of other places in the Old Testament, to suggest that the Holy Spirit has caused terminology to be used which might be difficult to understand in the light of the knowledge then available but would become clear in the light of New Testament teaching (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-12), and that the use of the plural in relation to the thrones involves a hint of the New Testament revelation that God exists in three persons;<sup>7</sup> cf. the definite intimation of the trinity in Isaiah 48:16.

Verse 10 ends with the words "and the books were opened." Revelation 20 contains a similar statement in connection with a judgment of individuals, where books that contain records of their deeds are opened and they are judged accordingly. Here we have an entirely different situation. This is not a judgment of individuals but of an ungodly governmental system that crushes God's people for centuries. It would not be necessary to hold a deliberative meeting to decide what God would do about this situation. Hundreds of years in advance He predicted to Daniel that the fourth kingdom would arise and also described its end. The reference to these books points to the fact that the Lord's decree for the final end of ungodly human government was made long before this fourth beast came into

existence. It should not be connected with Revelation 20 but with Revelation 5, where search was made for one who could open a book that was sealed with seven seals, and when the book was opened (Rev. 6ff.) the wrath of God was poured out upon the world. In the light of context the statement, "the books were opened," would seem to refer to the fulfillment of God's predicted judgment rather than to a search for facts in order to make a decision.

## 2. The Destruction of the Fourth Beast

(11) "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. (12) (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)"

We do not know whether Daniel, while watching the symbolic picture of the authority and power of the Ancient of Days, could still hear the boastful words the horn was speaking, or whether he was recalling the earthly scene. In either case he was greatly disturbed by these sounds and kept wondering what God would do about the horn. The latter part of the verse gives the answer. As he looked he saw the beast slain and its body destroyed and given to the blazing fire.

This corresponds to the picture in chapter 2 where the statue was hit by the stone and so completely demolished that all its parts were broken into small pieces and completely eradicated.

The verse makes no mention of the fate of the little horn, which is to be understood as included in the destruction of the beast.

The next verse (v. 12) states that the first three beasts had continued to live for a time, though they had been stripped of their authority. This means that Daniel had as yet seen no indication of the destruction of any one of these three

beasts, though he had realized that each of them had been replaced in power by a succeeding one. Now he tells about something that he had already seen but had not yet mentioned, that though these beasts, one after another, had lost their power, they had continued to live for a period of time!

The characteristics of each kingdom did not disappear when it was conquered but continued to some extent under the next kingdom. In each case the language and culture of the previous kingdom remained for a time as an important factor, and the ungodly features of each kingdom were displayed anew in the activities of the following one. Thus many of the characteristics of Nebuchadnezzar's rule were continued by the Persians. Some of the monuments erected by Cyrus and his successors even included portions written in the Babylonian language and using the Babylonian type of writing. Comparison of these inscriptions with their parallels in Old Persian gave archaeologists the first key for deciphering the Babylonian and Assyrian inscriptions.

When the Persian empire was conquered by Alexander it was his desire to unite the two nations into one people. He followed the Persian system of organization by which the empire was divided into sections called satrapies. Soon after his early death his generals began to fight for supreme control and for forty years their armies marched and countermarched, fighting many great battles against one another. Yet during all this turmoil the general populace remained fairly quiet. In many parts of the Hellenistic kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was divided, Persian culture continued to be a vital factor.

Thus each of the first two beasts could be said to live on for a time after its dominion was taken away. The statement was even more applicable in the case of the third beast. Except for administrative documents the Greek language continued to be generally used throughout the eastern portion of the Roman empire. Eventually Greek culture was widely adopted in Rome and came to have so great an influence on Roman life and thought that the Greeks could almost be said to have conquered their conquerors. The

statement that they "were allowed to live for a period of time" can well be taken as showing that many of the features of each kingdom would continue for quite a time after its dominion had been lost.

In the case of the fourth beast Daniel saw an entirely different situation. When it lost its authority, it ceased to live. The statement in verse 11 that its body was destroyed and given to the blazing fire indicates that all its characteristics would come to a final end, including those qualities inherited from the previous three kingdoms. Not only the iron and clay, but also the bronze, the silver and the gold would disappear.

### 3. The Son of Man

(13) "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached<sup>a</sup> the Ancient of Days and was led<sup>b</sup> into his presence. (14) He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations, and men of every language worshiped him.<sup>c</sup> His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

<sup>a</sup>Better, "he had approached." The perfect tense may properly be translated as an English pluperfect, as the NIV has rendered this same tense in v. 12 and elsewhere.

<sup>b</sup>Better, "and been led."

<sup>c</sup>Better, "that all...should worship him." This is a more accurate rendering of the Aramaic imperfect (cf. KJV "should serve him").<sup>9</sup>

Verse 13 introduces a new character, "one like a son of man." In ordinary usage this phrase could be used simply to mean an individual man. In Daniel 8:17 Gabriel addresses Daniel as "son of man." In Ezekiel God uses the same term dozens of times in addressing the prophet. In the verse now

under discussion the natural interpretation would be that Daniel saw coming with the clouds a figure that looked like a human being.

Since so much symbolism is used in this chapter it is not at all strange that many have suggested that this is merely a symbolic picture to represent the glorification of the saints. Yet at a very early time readers of Daniel began to interpret it as meaning that Daniel saw a picture of a literal future event.

The fact that Daniel did not say that he saw "a son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven, but "one like a son of man," might suggest that he realized that this was more than a man. When the high priest demanded of Jesus: "Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God," Jesus answered: "Yes, it is as you say... But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64; also Mark 14:62). This reply, so strongly echoing Daniel 7:13, showed clearly that Jesus considered that verse to refer to a literal event and to represent something that was yet to occur.

As further evidence that this part of the vision depicts a literal future fact we should note the promise of the angels. After the disciples saw Jesus ascend into heaven until "a cloud hid him from their sight," two men stood by them and said: "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). It would be hard to think of language that would more emphatically declare that Jesus will actually come on the clouds of heaven.

Although the vision had been mainly symbolic up to this point, it is evident that here Daniel saw a literal picture of something that would occur. However, this does not mean that everything in verse 13 was presented to him as a literal picture. Since God the Father does not have a body all representations of Him in human form are symbolic, and the statement in the last part of verse 13 that the Son of Man came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him



must be a symbolic representation of the fact that Jesus Christ would receive His authority and dominion from God the Father. It is reasonable to think that this represents something that had occurred before His coming with the clouds. The fact of His coming is described by a participle showing what Daniel saw occurring. What follows is given in the perfect tense and in English its meaning can be well expressed by the pluperfect: "He had come to the Ancient of Days and had been presented before Him, and had been given authority and power and dominion." This fact is pictured in Acts 2:34-36, Psalm 2:7-9 and Psalm 110:1-2. Thus verse 13 presents the same facts as those contained in Jesus' statement to the high priest (quoted above) except that its two parts are mentioned in reverse order, while Jesus gave them in the order in which they would occur.

On a previous occasion Jesus had made a definite reference to Daniel's vision of the Son of Man as describing a great future event: "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30; cf. Mk. 14:62).

Thus verses 13-14 look forward to the establishment of an indestructible kingdom when the Son of Man will appear in glory, and also stress the fact that His authority was given Him by God the Father (cf. Jn. 5:22, 26-27; also note Ps. 2:7 12).

### **The Brief Interpretation**

Daniel was greatly perplexed by what he had seen. Perhaps it did not immediately occur to him that it might be related to the dream he had interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar about forty-five years earlier. While still in the vision he noticed some individuals standing near and wondered whether one of them would be able to tell him the meaning of the vision.

(15) "I, Daniel, was troubled in spirit, and the visions that passed through my mind disturbed

me. (16) I approached one of those standing there and asked him the true meaning of all this. So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: (17) 'The four great beasts are four kingdoms\* that will rise from the earth. (18) But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever -- yes, for ever and ever.'

Except for its first four words the bystander's explanation (vv. 17-18) could just as well be a summary description of the facts already revealed in Daniel 2. It is entirely in literal terms except for one interesting phrase. The beasts that Daniel saw coming "up out of the sea" (v. 3) are said to represent four kingdoms that "will rise from the earth" (v. 17). Both sea and earth are symbols, one indicating the tumultuous nature of the human life from which human governments spring and the other pointing to their earthly nature. Here what could look like a contradiction merely indicates a second part of the same truth.

The permanence and indestructibility of the kingdom that will replace the four great kingdoms has been emphasized in Daniel 2:44 and 7:14b. In verse 18 the bystander repeats this emphasis and adds a new thought: God will give His saints a vital place in the rule of the everlasting kingdom.

This is the first mention of "saints" in Daniel's prophecy. The Aramaic word used here occurred several times earlier in the book, but probably did not refer to human beings in any of those occurrences. It was translated "holy" in the phrase "holy gods" as used by Nebuchadnezzar in 4:8, 9 and 18 and by Belshazzar's mother in 5:11. It was translated "a holy one", referring to a divine messenger, in 4:13 and 23, and "holy ones" in a similar usage in 4:17. In this chapter it is applied to God's holy people six times (vv. 18, 21, 22 (twice), 25 and 27), telling of their persecution by the

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*\*The Aramaic word means "kings," but it is obvious that here they represent kingdoms or dynasties.*

little horn and promising that the Son of man, who receives the indestructible kingdom, will share His rule with His sanctified people. This fits with Jesus' promise that His followers will be joined with Him in His rule (Matt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30).

Daniel was not satisfied with this short summary of the meaning of the vision, which did not even mention the parts that had disturbed him. In asking for further information, he summarized these parts, adding a number of details that he remembered seeing, but had not previously mentioned.

### **Daniel's Request for Further Information**

(19) "Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others and most terrifying, with its iron teeth and bronze claws -- the beast that crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot what ever was left. (20) I also wanted to know about the ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell -- the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully. (21) As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, (22) until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced\* judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom."

In his earlier account of the fourth beast, Daniel had mentioned its iron teeth. Now he added a reference to its bronze claws (v. 19). This could be taken as merely part of the description of the terrifying nature of the beast. Yet it

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*\*The KJV rendering "judgment was given to the saints" is more literal. The verse does not describe the making of a decision but the enforcement of God's judgment.*

might be proper to bring it into connection with the recollection of the dream that Daniel had interpreted for Nebuchadnezzar 45 years earlier (though one should be extremely hesitant about doing the reverse). In that vision iron stood specifically for the fourth kingdom and bronze for the third. It is not impossible that this reference to bronze claws might involve a suggestion that the fourth beast would take over many of the qualities of the third kingdom and would even more effectively display them. The bronze claws that were able to reach out and seize large territories could be typical of Alexander's conquests, but would find even greater expression in the wide-ranging Roman conquests that continued during a much longer period of time.

Daniel also added further information about the little horn, saying that it "was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came." No indication is given as to how these facts were symbolized in the vision. Evidently Daniel's mind was so filled with the realization of the glory of the Ancient of Days that up to this point he failed to mention the previous difficulties of God's people. When the bystander said that the saints would receive the kingdom Daniel was reminded of what they had suffered, and therefore mentioned it in his recapitulation (cf. also v. 25 below).

There is no promise that the saints will prevail over the little horn before the Ancient of Days comes. Their deliverance will await His coming.

In verse 22 the phrase "until the Ancient of Days came" obviously refers to the coming of the Son of Man with the clouds of heaven to take possession of the kingdom to which the Father has already given him title (v. 14). Here the prophet uses the term Ancient of Days to refer to the Son of Man. The term represents God's character as the Eternal One who has always existed and it can properly be applied to the triune God or to any member of the God head. In verse 9 it is applied to the triune God as He exerts His supreme power; in verse 13 it is applied to God the Father as He gives the Son the right to possess the kingdom

(cf. Ps. 2); and in verse 22 to God the Son, in describing His second advent.

Daniel's purpose in these four verses was to ask for further information about the fourth beast and the boastful horn and in so doing he added details that had not been mentioned before. The next five verses give the bystander's answer.

### **The Enlarged Explanation of the Latter Part of the Vision**

(23) "He gave me this explanation: "The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. (24) The ten horns are ten kings who will come from this kingdom. After them another king will arise, different from the earlier ones; he will subdue three kings. (25) He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. (26) But the court will sit,\* and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. (27) Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him."

This additional explanation begins with the statement that the fourth beast represents a kingdom that would be different from all the previous kingdoms. Its control would extend further and would be more destructive.

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\*Better "the judgment is set" as in KJV. Since the verb *y<sup>e</sup>tib* often means "remain" or "abide," "is set" is a justifiable rendering. See *Excursus on pp. 106-109*.

In verses 24-25 the second phase of this kingdom is described. It is explained that the ten horns represent ten kings. Those holding the Maccabean view wish to take them as representing ten successive kings, but the statement that the new king will overcome three others militates against that idea.

In this second explanation the bystander gives new information about the boastful horn, an individual who had no counterpart in the dream described in Daniel 2. He was first introduced in Daniel 7:8 and additional information was given in Daniel's enlarged account of the latter part of the vision in verses 20-22 and also here in the bystander's explanation in verses 24-26.

These various statements show the importance of the predicted crisis. The horn will almost destroy God's people, but they will be delivered by the coming of the Ancient of Days.

Young says of this little horn: "It is, I believe, that one of whom Paul spoke, 'Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there be a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 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, shewing himself that he is God' (2 Thes. 2:3, 4). This one is the Anti-Christ."<sup>10</sup>

There would seem to be little doubt that the figure called the little horn represents a great enemy of God who has not yet appeared. It is somewhat unfortunate that the name Antichrist has come to be generally applied to this individual since that term is applied in the New Testament to any important enemy of our Saviour. In 1 John 2:18 the apostle declared that even in his day there were many antichrists. Yet the word has come to be rather generally used by interpreters of widely varying viewpoints as a designation for the individual predicted by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 and it is convenient to use it in this limited sense.

In the bystander's explanation two new facts about the little horn are mentioned. The first of these is that the king

"will try to change the set times and the laws" (v. 25). Holders of the Maccabean view, claiming that Daniel was written during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, say that these words refer to that ruler's attempt to do away with Jewish beliefs and customs. Holders of the evangelical view say that such an interpretation is ruled out by the fact that the horns come from the fourth empire rather than the third, or Hellenistic, to which Antiochus Epiphanes belonged. If one looks for a past fulfillment in the history of the Roman empire the only event that might reasonably be suggested as having fulfilled this description came near its beginning (even before it was called an empire) when Julius Caesar introduced a new calendar that was standard in the western world for more than fifteen hundred years, and also made many desirable improvements in Roman law. Since Julius Caesar came so early in the history of the Roman empire and was not preceded by ten kings of whom he overthrew three, this must be ruled out as a fulfillment. Hardly any recent interpreter would think that Julius Caesar was the predicted "little horn."

The other new fact contained in the bystander's interpretation is that the saints will be handed over to the little horn "for a time, times and half a time." There is no evidence in the context to determine the exact application of these words, though it is not unreasonable to suggest that a period of three and a half years is meant.

Many guesses have been made about the identity of the Antichrist. We can be sure that all that is clearly stated in the Bible will certainly occur, but we ought to reserve judgment on details that God has not revealed. The prophecies were not given to satisfy curiosity, but to encourage God's people to stand true, knowing that His will is always best.

Verses 26-27 again parallel the three great events in the dynamic portion of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The first part of verse 26 shows the supernatural origin of the force that will destroy the boastful horn. The rest of the verse predicts the complete destruction of the Antichrist and all that he represents. Verse 27 tells of the establishment of the universal

kingdom of the Son of Man. The verse anticipates Jesus' promise that He will associate His people with Him in His rule by saying that the power "will be handed over to the saints," but goes on to speak of "his kingdom" and to declare that all "will worship and obey him."

In considering Nebuchadnezzar's dream we were left with the question whether the destruction of the statue by the stone and the enlargement of the stone to cover the whole earth represent two parts of a process that would gradually be accomplished, with both parts occurring simultaneously, or whether the supernatural stone would destroy all that the statue symbolizes before the universal kingdom would be established in its place. It would be hard to draw a conclusive answer from that chapter alone, but in chapter 7 only one view seems possible. The little horn fights against the saints and greatly injures them. It is only by a divine intervention that they are delivered. It is not the saints who destroy the fourth beast but the power of God. The universal kingdom of righteousness and peace is not established until the Son of Man comes in the clouds of heaven with authority received from His Father.

It is said that the kingdom is received by the saints (v. 18). It is said that it is handed over to them (v. 27). They are graciously given a share in its control. They do not themselves win the kingdom.

This model would seem to fit with the impression given by the first chapter of Acts. In that chapter the Lord does not say that His people are to set up the kingdom. Instead He directs them to be His witnesses throughout the world while they wait for His return. They are to be His instruments to tell the story of His wonderful grace. While He carries the statue will continue to stand. The terrible fourth beast will continue to exert its ferocious power, culminating in the activity of the little horn. The ultimate victory will be accomplished through a definite intervention of God when the Son of Man will come to set up His indestructible and universal kingdom.

At the end of our discussion of chapter 2 we noticed the problem raised by the many centuries that have passed



since the time when the historic Roman empire is often said to have come to an end (A.D. 400-600). In chapter 2 the stone hits the statue on its feet, which represent the second phase of the fourth kingdom. Similarly in chapter 7 the little horn and the ten horns among which it appears come out of the fourth kingdom. These events can hardly be said to have occurred as yet. Today an even larger part of the world is under the control of brutal dictatorial governments than in the time of the historic Roman empire. Even in those sections of the world that boast a large measure of freedom, corruption and wickedness are often found in high places.

As we saw, there are three possible ways of explaining the long period of time since A.D. 400: (1) the possibility that the phase represented by the feet and toes can be thought of as starting at about A.D. 400-600 and continuing through all the intervening time until the actual destruction of the fourth beast; (2) the possibility that the fourth beast is to be thought of as continuing through all the centuries since A.D. 400-600, so that there is a continued though foreshortened view of the fourth beast which will include a final period when the condition indicated by the feet and toes will exist and the little horn will appear; (3) the possibility that the first phase of the fourth kingdom ended at about A.D. 400-600, and that there is a long unmentioned interval in the prophetic picture between its first and second phase. It is probably impossible, as yet, to know with certainty which of these three models best fits the relation of the prophecy to its fulfillment. As of now, the present writer inclines toward the second. There is a remarkable parallel between the latter part of these chapters and the picture in Revelation 19:11-20:6.

There a supernatural force, headed by One who is designated as King of kings and Lord of lords (19:16) defeats the ungodly hosts of wickedness and establishes a universal kingdom (20:4). After one thousand years a great attempt is made to overthrow this kingdom (Rev. 20:7-9), but this attempt is a complete failure, paralleling the statements in chapters 2 and 7 that the new divine kingdom will never be destroyed or taken over by another people.

## **Conclusion to Chapter 7**

We have noted the marked similarity between chapter 7 and chapter 2. Each gives an account of four kingdoms, representing the continuing power of ungodly human government. Each indicates that the first of these four kingdoms is that of Nebuchadnezzar. In each account the fourth kingdom is represented as the most terrible.

In chapter 2 and also in chapter 7 a second phase of the fourth kingdom is described. In chapter 2 this second phase is characterized by a great weakening of the kingdom, involving a mixture of peoples. In chapter 7 a glimpse is given of ten kings, with an eleventh who overcomes three of them, speaks very boastfully, makes war against the saints and oppresses them for a time, but eventually is destroyed as part of the final destruction of the terrible fourth kingdom.

In each there is a final dynamic section including three great events. The first of these is the supernatural origin of the force that will destroy all the beasts. This supernatural origin is represented in chapter 2 by the fact that the rock was "cut out without hands." In chapter 7 it is indicated by a great symbolic picture of the supreme power of the triune God (vv. 9-10) and again in verse 14 by the act of the Ancient of Days in giving power and glory to the Son of Man.

The second event is the destruction of every remnant of wicked human government. In chapter 2 this is represented by the complete destruction and removal of every part of the statue. In chapter 7 it is represented by the destruction and burning of the fourth beast, of which the little horn is a part.

The third event is the establishment of a new universal kingdom of righteousness and peace. In chapter 2 this is symbolized by the growth of the stone until it covers the whole earth. In chapter 7 it is represented by the coming of the Son of Man, invested by His Father with power over all nations, and associating the saints with him in His government.

### **Excursus on the KJV Rendering of Daniel 7:9-10 and 26**

In verses 9-10 there are three places where most of the recent translations differ greatly from the KJV. The first of these relates to the KJV rendering of the first line of the passage: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down." Although the meaning "cast" or "cast into" fits the context very well in most of the twelve places where the verb *r<sup>e</sup>ma* occurs in Biblical Aramaic it is generally recognized that it would be extremely difficult to find a reasonable way to fit the idea of thrones being "cast down" into this part of Daniel's vision, and all of the recent translators render *r<sup>e</sup>ma* as "to set or place" in this verse. They support this idea by pointing to the fact that the Targum (the ancient translation into Aramaic) uses *r<sup>e</sup>ma* in Jeremiah 1:15 to translate the second verb in the sentence: "their kings will come and set up their thrones."

It should be noted that the phrase "thrones were placed," or "thrones were set in place" does not necessarily mean that Daniel saw thrones brought in and put into place. It is equally possible to understand the words as meaning that as the heavenly scene came before his eyes it included thrones already standing in their proper place.

The other important differences between the KJV and the NIV renderings occur in the second and eleventh of the twelve lines in the passage (as divided into lines in the NIV). Both of them deserve attention, as they can greatly affect the impression produced by the passage as a whole.

The lines between line 2 and line 11, if read by themselves, give the impression that what Daniel saw was an awe-inspiring symbolic representation of the tremendous power of God, pictured as sitting on a fiery throne with a river of fire flowing from it, while untold millions stand before Him to carry out His commands. In most of the recent translations the effect of this symbolic representation of the great Creator of the universe, whose power is supreme and whose wisdom far surpasses that of all His creatures, is somewhat blunted by the impression given by

the beginning and end of the passage, which can make it seem merely to say that Daniel saw the beginning of a judicial meeting where attendants brought in thrones and put them in place and then the Lord entered and took His seat in order to preside at a court session.

Thus there are some who think that the rendering of lines 2 and 11 in recent versions radically changes the effect of the passage as a whole from that produced by the KJV translation.

In the second line the KJV reads "and the Ancient of days did sit." This rendering left it open whether the verse described God as taking a seat in order to begin a meeting or whether he was viewed as already sitting in majestic glory. An argument for a wording similar to that of the KJV could be based on the fact that a great many of the occurrences of the Aramaic verb *y<sup>e</sup>tib* and of its Hebrew cognate *yashab* do not refer to the beginning of sitting but to its continuance, and that the NIV often renders these verbs as "dwell," "remain," or "continue." Thus the NIV rendering "took his seat" might be said to introduce an idea that is not required by the context, while "sat" might equally well be interpreted as meaning that when Daniel turned his eyes to the heavenly scene he saw God sitting in indescribable glory and was assured that God remains on His throne and that His purposes are certain of accomplishment, even if earthly conditions should appear to be hopeless.

The difference in the impression made by the recent translations of the eleventh line of the passage may seem even more important. The KJV renders this line as "the judgment was set." Most of the recent translations say: "the court was seated." Here the question might be raised whether such a phrase as "the court sat" or "the court will sit" is really an anachronism, for there is no evidence of its use when the book of Daniel was written. In modern times they indicate the beginning or continuance of a meeting of a jury or other tribunal for carrying on judicial business. Except for these recent translations of Daniel 7:10 and 26, there is no Old Testament evidence for such an idea.

The English word "court" has had an interesting development

Originally it simply indicated an enclosed space (or courtyard), and this is its meaning in every one of its 146 occurrences in the KJV, and in most of its occurrences in the NIV. Eventually the word came to be generally applied to the headquarters of a king, and the king's associates came to be called "courtiers." In modern times the function of trying criminals and judging disputes, which had formerly been exercised by kings or their representatives, came generally to be assigned to a group of judges or jurors and the legal phrase "the court sits" came into general use. There is no evidence of such a usage in ancient Israel.

The Aramaic word *dina* and its Hebrew cognate *din* are always translated "judgment," "plea," "cause," or "strife" by the KJV, and also by the NIV in most of their occurrences outside of this chapter. Here the NIV renders *dina* by "court" in verses 10 and 26, but by its usual meaning of "judgment" in verse 22.

*Beth-din*, "house of judgment," occurs in post-Biblical Hebrew, but no instance where *din* alone is used to mean "court."

The KJV frequently uses the word "court," but always with its primary meaning of an enclosed place. Its specific use for a judicial tribunal is a modern development. The NIV uses the word "court" many times, but nowhere outside of this chapter as a rendering of *dina* or *din*.

In the NIV the eleventh line of the passage reads: "The court was seated." In the KJV it reads: "the judgment was set." A good argument can be made for preferring the KJV reading, since the translation of *dina* as "court" is highly questionable and the rendering of *y<sup>e</sup>tib* as "was set" presents no difficulty. As mentioned above, *y<sup>e</sup>tib* is the Biblical Aramaic cognate of the Hebrew *yashab* which is often used to mean "remain" or "continue." Here (and in v. 26) the phrase might point to the certainty that God's predetermined will shall be accomplished. Thus "the judgment was set" is a possible rendering in line 11 of verses 9-10 and also in verse 26.

Whatever is decided about verses 9 and 10 would determine the decision about verse 26. The NIV translates verse

26: "But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever." The KJV translates it: "But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end."

### Comparative Analysis of Chapters 2 and 7.

	Daniel 2		::	Daniel 7		
	Dream	Inter- retation	::	Vision	Short Interp	Recap New Interp
Four Kingdoms	31-33	37-40	::	2-7	17	
Fourth Kingdom	33	40	::	7		19 23
Second Phase	33b	41-43	::	7g-8		20-21 24-25
Rock Origin	34a	44a	::	9-10	18a	22a 26a
Destruction of Statue	34b-35	44c	::	11-12		22b-c 26b
Growth of Rock	35d	44a	::	13-14	18a	27
Permanence of the Rock		44b,d	::	14c	18	27

### Notes

- <sup>^1</sup> Cf. R. P. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, (Yale Oriental Series. Researches. Vol. 15. New Haven. 1929) esp. p. 197.
- <sup>^2</sup> Cf. discussion on pp. 16-18.
- <sup>^3</sup> The fact that Dan. 7:4 points back to 4:16 is quite obvious in the KJV which refers to "a man's heart" in both places. The connection is not so apparent in the NIV which twice substitutes "mind" in 4:16, though rendering the same Aramaic word as "heart" in 7:4 and in other passages.
- <sup>^4</sup> The suggestion that the ten toes in chapter 2 (where the number "ten" is not even mentioned in the description) were intended to have a special significance must be rejected as speculative. This is particularly true since the vision in chapter 7 with its mention of ten horns was given more than 40 years later than the dream in chapter 2.
- <sup>^5</sup> This rendering is preferable to the past tense found here in the NIV. The Aramaic imperfect generally looks toward the future rather than

toward the past, and is usually so rendered in the NIV. At this point the KJV renders it "that every . . . should serve him." The *Anchor Bible* translates it "must serve him," and says: "In the Aramaic text special emphasis is laid on the object pronoun by its position before the verb: it is he whom all the nations...must serve" (vol. 23, p. 206).

- ^6 John Calvin, *Commentary on Daniel* (reprint, Grand Rapids, 1948), volume 2, p. 32.
- ^7 In this connection attention may be called to a suggestion quoted in the Talmud as having been made by Rabbi Akiba, who was prominent in the second century after Christ. The *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1971) calls Akiba "probably the foremost scholar of his age." In a note in the "Evangelical Quarterly", Vol. 23 (1951), p. 212, F. F. Bruce says: "The Talmud (b. Sanh. 38 b) preserves the account of a discussion on this subject, in the course of which Rabbi Akiba suggested that one throne was placed for the Ancient of Days Himself 'and one for David' -- meaning by 'David' the Messiah, 'the great David's greater Son'. This identification of 'the son of man' with the Messiah was no doubt an ancient and formerly respectable interpretation. But, because it was an interpretation which would obviously have commended itself to Christians as a confirmation of their belief, it had become unacceptable, and even blasphemous, to the Jewish doctors in general. Hence a vigorous protest was made when Akiba aired it ... There is evidence that something approaching the interpretation may have been held by early Jewish interpreters."
- ^8 Both the KJV and the NIV frequently render the Aramaic perfect as an English pluperfect. The failure of the KJV to do so in v. 12 results in giving the very strange impression that the first three beasts continued to live after the fourth beast had been destroyed. See also p. 120.
- ^9 See note 5 above.
- ^10 E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949) p. 150.

## **Special Note on "Son of Man" and Daniel 7:13-14**

Since these verses have given rise to a great deal of discussion, particularly in books and articles dealing with New Testament subjects, it seemed wise to postpone their fuller treatment to this special note. We shall first consider the meaning of the term "Son of Man" as used in the Gospels. We will then discuss three questions about the interpretation of Daniel 7:13-14, and will conclude with a brief survey of the ideas presented by critical New Testament scholars in recent years.

### **Why Jesus Called Himself "the Son of Man"**

It is quite generally thought that the term "Son of Man," which occurs over 80 times in the Gospels, always in words spoken by Jesus, takes its start from Daniel 7:13-14. This was my own opinion before I began to investigate the matter more carefully. Now, however, I am quite convinced that out of the more than one hundred occurrences of the term in the Old Testament, the one in Daniel 7:13, though eventually becoming of great importance, is not the starting point for the title used in the New Testament.

The statement is often made that "Son of Man" is an alternative title for the Messiah. This common approach is completely disproved by Matthew 16:13-20 where Jesus asks His disciples: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" Among the various answers given there is no mention of "Messiah." When Peter said: "You are the Christ" (Greek for



"Messiah"), "the Son of the living God," Jesus answered: "Blessed are you . . . for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." Then Jesus "warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ" (v. 20). Jesus referred to Himself as "the Son of Man," not only when speaking to His disciples, but also when speaking before crowds (e.g. Lk. 11:29-30) and even when speaking to His enemies (e.g. Lk. 5:24; and perhaps John 12:34). If "Son of Man" had obviously meant "Messiah" it would have been absurd to praise Peter for recognizing the fact, and even more absurd to ask the disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ!

In adopting the term "Son of Man" as a designation for Himself, Jesus chose a phrase that occurs more than 90 times in the book of Ezekiel but only 14 times in the rest of the Hebrew portion of the Old Testament and only once in its Aramaic portion (Dan. 7:13). Most of the 14 occurrences are in poetic statements, often with the word "man" used in a preceding parallel clause.<sup>^1</sup>

As we seek to understand Jesus' use of the term it is helpful to look at the earliest recorded occasion on which He is said to have used it. This was at His meeting with the skeptical Nathanael. When Nathanael expressed great surprise that Jesus knew so much about him, Jesus said: "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that ... I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (John 1:50-51).

When Nathanael heard these words he surely remembered the many times that God had addressed Ezekiel by this expression. He might also remember that when God ordered Gabriel to explain a vision to Daniel, Gabriel addressed Daniel as "Son of man" (Dan. 8:16-17). The words would suggest that Jesus was a man who was very close to God, one to whom God would often reveal aspects of truth.

The use of the term would set Jesus apart, enabling Him to make statements about Himself, His authority and His future in a way that would sound unique without sounding egotistical, and would stress His closeness to God.

It was Jesus' plan that His followers should be enabled, through listening to His teaching and observing His life, to realize the greatness and uniqueness of His person. The title "Son of Man" would suggest that He was one through whom God would reveal His truth, as He had done through Ezekiel and Daniel (cf. Dan. 8:17). The extent of this closeness to God, illustrated by the picture of the angels ascending and descending on Him from heaven (John 1:51), would become more apparent in the events of the last year of His ministry (John 7ff.) and would be still more fully revealed in the discourse given to the disciples in the upper room (John 13-17). Yet even then He would find it necessary to say, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?" (John 14:9a). A few days later, after His resurrection, He would hear disciples on the road to Emmaus mourning His death and saying, "but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21a). Jesus' use of the term "Son of Man" had a valuable part in helping the disciples move forward toward realization of His uniqueness, and in preparing them to be God's instruments for winning converts and establishing the Christian church. It helped to train them for this purpose over a period of years, building up in their hearts a love for Him and a realization of His greatness, but not arousing such opposition as could bring a premature end to His mission.

At that time many Jews were looking for the coming of a "Messiah" (Greek "Christ"), who they thought would organize them into a military force that would overthrow the Roman power and establish a great empire. Public declaration that Jesus was the Messiah might immediately draw to Him many Jews who were not of the type that He desired to have for His disciples. Even though He constantly ordered that His followers keep silent about His Messiahship there was at least one occasion when a crowd desired to make Him king by force (Jn. 6:15). It was His purpose to gather and train those who would become the spiritual leaders of the early church. Attracting great numbers of Jews of a different type would only be a hindrance

to the fulfillment of this purpose. In addition it would probably lead to a decision by the Roman rulers, who had already forcibly put down movements of this type, to attack Him and His followers. Public use of the term "Christ" in Galilee or Judea would almost certainly have aroused such immediate opposition that it would have cut short the period of ministry that He desired to have; during most of His ministry He abstained from using it.

As Jesus continued to call Himself "the Son of Man" He began to use this title in ways that suggested an authority beyond that of a spokesman for God. All three of the synoptic gospels report that He declared that "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5). All three report that He said that "the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. 9:6; Mark 2:10; Luke 5:24). As the disciples pondered on these and other statements it probably occurred to some of them that there was another Old Testament passage that might also be pertinent -- Daniel 7:13-14, which speaks of "one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven." As they wondered whether this might give a further clue to His reason for applying the title to Himself, they heard Him say that the time would come when men would "see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory" (Mk. 13:26; Matt. 16:27-28). At His trial before the Sanhedrin Jesus again echoed this verse from Daniel (Matt. 26:64; Mk. 14:62).

Thus Jesus' use of this title was a help in gradually leading the disciples to knowledge of His Person and His plan.

We cannot expect to understand the psychology of Jesus. In fact we cannot expect fully to understand the psychology of any person. Yet what we do understand may be very important.

Although Jesus was really God and could know all the mysteries of the universe He chose to limit Himself in certain regards. This is brought out very clearly in the story of His temptation. Satan urged Jesus to use His supernatural powers in ways that were contrary to God's plan. He could have completely eradicated wicked people from the earth

and immediately established a kingdom of righteousness, but He chose to perform His work in an entirely different way. Part of that plan was for Him to restrict a large part of His activity during His earthly life to the normal powers of human beings. Thus He chose not to turn the stones into bread but to go through the agonizing experiences of human beings facing unsatisfied needs and difficult situations. He chose to deal with human beings as they are. He might have waved His hands and produced apostles fully prepared to be His representatives, but He chose to spend many months teaching them, training them and leading them into experiences that would fit them for the great work that He had for them to do. His use of the term "Son of Man" played an important part in this section of His plan.

Some writers suggest that the term "Son of Man" conveyed the idea of human frailty. Others suggest that it carried the idea of the perfect Man, the second Adam. Some say that the fact that Ezekiel prophesied in a time of general sin and rebellion and promised deliverance and future blessing should be included in the meaning of the term. Some say that the term suggested both suffering and glory. Others say that it suggested a great eschatological Being who would come down from heaven. All of these ideas have their place in the understanding of the Person of Jesus, but it is a mistake to suggest that they would be involved in the popular understanding of the term. It would convey the idea that Jesus was a very unusual person, one similar to Ezekiel in his closeness to God, and as Jesus used it His words and His deeds would lead them to attach these ideas to their understanding of His Person. But they would not be involved in the term by itself.

### **Individual or Corporate?**

We shall now look at three questions about the interpretation of Daniel 7:13-14. The first is whether the "one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven" represents an individual or a large group of people. Although most of

those who discussed the passage before 1880, including most of the rabbinical writers and even including some of the most noted liberal scholars, held that it was a prediction of an individual Messiah, there has been a marked change during the last hundred years. Many recent discussions, including some by conservative scholars, have declared that in Daniel 7:13-14 the "one like a son of man" represents "the saints of the Most High."

In 1971 an English New Testament scholar, R. T. France, wrote as follows: "Since T. W. Manson's *The Teaching of Jesus* (1931) the emphasis has fallen largely on the corporate aspect of the figure, sometimes to the total denial of the individual."<sup>2</sup>

Two arguments have been advanced in support of this view. In the first place it was said that since the four beasts represent empires the "one like a son of man" must also represent a body of people. However, it should be pointed out that in the Aramaic original Daniel 7:17 does not say that the four beasts represent four kingdoms but that they represent four kings. The Aramaic word for kingdoms occurs in verses 14, 18, 22, 23, and 24 and three times in verse 27, but in verse 17 the Aramaic word for "king" is used, making it clear that the four beasts represent kings or dynasties rather than large groups of people. This is paralleled in Daniel's explanation of the four empires in chapter 2, where he says to Nebuchadnezzar, "You are that head of gold" (v. 38).

The corporate interpretation was also said to be proved by the fact that verses 18, 22 and 27 predict that "the saints" will enjoy a glorious future, but several facts militate against taking these wonderful promises as proof that "son of man" is a figure for the saints rather than a promise of an individual deliverer:

- 1) In the book of Daniel there is not always an exact parallel between vision and interpretation. This is particularly clear in chapters 7 and 8 (see chart on pp. 140-142). In chapter 7. when Daniel asks "one of those standing there" to tell him "the true meaning of all this"

(v. 16), the very brief answer (vv. 16b-17) omits all reference to many parts of the vision. Then, in the course of asking for more information, Daniel gives a fuller description of one part of the vision (vv. 19-22) and the bystander responds with a longer interpretation (vv. 23-27). The assumption that there is a one-to-one equivalence between all the elements of these interpretations and those of the visions is questionable.

- 2) The idea that the one coming with the clouds of heaven represents "the victorious saints" is not in harmony with the impression gained from the book as a whole, including this chapter. Verse 18 says that they "will receive the kingdom," not that they will conquer it. Verses 21-22 say that the evil king "was ... defeating them until the Ancient of Days came." In verse 22 the KJV reads "judgment was given to the saints of the Most High," which might suggest that they were victors, but most scholars believe that this verse is better translated, as in the NIV, "pronounced judgment in favor of the saints." Verses 25-27 say that the saints will be handed over to the evil king for a time but that his power will be taken away and that then "the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High." These predictions parallel the statement in Daniel 12:7 that the end of these things will come "when the power of the holy people has been finally broken." The saints are not pictured as conquerors but as people who, after enduring much suffering, are to benefit from God's mercy.
- 3) The statement in verse 27 that "the greatness of the kingdoms . . . will be handed over to the saints" is immediately followed by a sentence that uses the singular pronoun twice, speaking of "his kingdom" and saying that "all rulers will worship and obey him." These words, like those quoted above, fit better with the New Testament teaching that "the Lord Jesus will overthrow"

the lawless one "with the breath of his mouth and destroy" him "by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thes. 2:8). Jesus indicated that He will associate some of His people with Him in His rule (Matt. 19:28; Lk. 22:30; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10) but that the power and the final authority will remain in His hands (Lk. 1:33; 1 Cor. 15:24-25; Rev. 11:15).

- 4) Another objection to considering that "one like a son of man" is a symbol for the people of God may perhaps be drawn from the NIV translation of *p<sup>e</sup>lah* in verses 14 and 27 as indicating that all peoples will worship Him.<sup>3</sup> The Bible strongly condemns giving worship to anyone but God. Daniel 3 tells how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego risked their lives because of their refusal to obey the king's command to worship his golden image. If the "one like a son of man" represents Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, it is only right that He should be worshiped, but if the words should be taken to represent the saints the passage would seem to say that a time will come when it will be proper for human beings to worship other human beings.
- 5) If the interpretation of these three verses equates the "one like a son of man" with "the saints" as clearly as many recent writers suggest, it is indeed strange that during past centuries so many brilliant students, both Jewish and Christian, have interpreted it as a prediction of the coming Messiah. Strack and Billerbeck's great compendium of Jewish teaching in relation to the New Testament says: "Daniel 7:13f was never considered by the ancient Synagogue to be a collective symbol of 'the holy people.' . . . It was consistently applied to the individual Messiah."<sup>4</sup> In his great commentary on Matthew, J. P. Lange said that the idea "that the Son of Man, seen by Daniel in the clouds, was not the Messiah but the whole people of Israel" was "an absurd hypothesis," and declared that it had been refuted by Ewald in his *Jahrbucher* for 1850.<sup>5</sup>

- 6) While these five considerations might seem to give sufficient reason to follow the individual interpretation, I believe that for the Christian there is another reason of greater importance than any of them. If Jesus Christ is God and therefore everything He says is true, surely any clear statement by Him should settle the matter. The gospels tell us that on two occasions He echoed this verse, declaring that at some future time men will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64; cf. 16:27; parallels in Mk. 13:26-27; 14:62; Lk. 21:27). Surely His word should make it conclusive that the "one like a son of man" is here a symbol for the One who is fully God and yet became man.

### **Direction: Toward Earth or Toward Heaven?**

#### **Does the Coming Precede or Follow the Glorification?**

The second question concerns the direction in which the "one like a son of man" is coming. The natural interpretation of the first sentence in verse 13 would seem to be that Daniel saw the "one like a son of man" coming toward the earth. The Aramaic verb used here, like its Hebrew cognate, is always translated "come."

Daniel 7:13-14 describes two events. One is briefly pictured in the first sentence of verse 13. Daniel saw "one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven." The other event is described in more detail: "he approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power: all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom one that will never be destroyed." We might call the first of these events "the coming" and the second "the glorification". Our present question is whether they occurred in the order in which they are mentioned -- in which case it would seem that the son of man was not coming toward the earth but going toward



heaven -- or whether Daniel, after mentioning the coming to earth, recalls the glorification by the Ancient of Days, which he had already observed but had not previously mentioned. Such an arrangement of events in Daniel's account of his dream would not be at all unique. In verses 19-22 (especially v. 21) Daniel refers to events he had already described and adds facts he had not previously mentioned. Neither the bronze claws (v. 19) nor the important actions described in verse 21 were mentioned in Daniel's earlier account of the vision.

We must recognize that all languages have their own types of ambiguity and that these vary from language to language. The Aramaic verb forms used in this account of the glorification do not require that it be thought of as occurring later than the coming, but can equally well be considered as describing events that preceded it. In the latter case we would tend in English to begin the second sentence of verse 13 with a pluperfect -- "He had approached . . . and been led . . . He had been given." that all . . . should." The pluperfect does not exist as a separate form in Aramaic or Hebrew but its meaning is occasionally expressed by the perfect tense. In Aramaic usage it is entirely possible that the second sentence of verse 13 is intended to describe something that occurred before the event mentioned in its first sentence.

An exact parallel to this grammatical possibility is found in verse 12 of this same chapter. As rendered in the KJV this verse seems to say that the first three beasts were allowed to live for a period of time after the fourth beast had been destroyed. The NIV properly renders the first verb in verse 12 as a pluperfect, "had been stripped," since the context makes it very clear that when the fourth beast was destroyed it meant the final end of all four, though each of the first three had been permitted to continue to exist for a time during the reign of its successor. We find similar translations of the Aramaic perfect as an English pluperfect in the NIV of Daniel 2:24; 3:2, 3, 7; 5:2 and 6:24.

This interpretation as pluperfect corresponds to the teaching of Psalm 2:4-8 and Psalm 110:1 which reveal God's

plan to establish His Son in a position of authority before the actual destruction of the wicked.

Thus the fact that the coming is mentioned before the glorification may suggest one order of events, while the use of the word "come" may suggest another.

However, the Bible does not leave us in uncertainty between these two interpretations. When Jesus specifically echoed this verse in his reply to the high priest his statement was unambiguous, as far as the order of events is concerned. In Matthew 26:64 and Mark 14:62 the words "sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One" precede the words "coming on the clouds of heaven" and there is no grammatical possibility of understanding them in a way that could reverse the order of events.

If we believe that Jesus Christ is truly God and knew all things we are compelled to infer from His statement that the two events mentioned in Daniel 7:13 occurred in Daniel's vision in an order different from that in which Daniel mentioned them, and that the coming foreseen in Daniel's vision was a coming to earth, not a going to heaven.

### **Does Daniel 7:13 Predict the Ascension?**

If the coming on the clouds had pictured a going toward heaven rather than a coming toward earth, it would have been reasonable to think of it as a prediction of Jesus' ascension to heaven, where he would be told to sit at God's right hand and wait until the Lord would make his enemies the footstool for his feet (Ps. 110:1).

But, as we have seen, the word "coming" suggests a motion toward earth rather than the reverse, and the order in which the events are mentioned does not necessarily indicate that the glorification would follow the coming rather than precede it.

The words of Christ as he stood before the high priest give a particularly clear answer to this question. Jesus told his antagonists that they would see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64; Mk. 14:62). Ungodly men did not see the ascension, but when Jesus returns to

establish righteousness and destroy all that is evil He will come "with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him" (Rev. 1:7).

The description of the ascension in the first chapter of Acts is also relevant. The angelic messengers told the disciples that "this same Jesus" whom they saw going (not coming) into heaven would "come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Clearly this is not a picture of the ascension but of the "Parousia" (Christ's Second Coming)!

### **A Survey of Recent Critical Views**

The many occurrences of the term "Son of Man" in the gospels have been the subject of numerous lengthy and involved discussions by critical New Testament scholars, many of which refer to Daniel 7:13. None, so far as I have noticed, give consideration to the other occurrence in Daniel (8:17) and few of the more recent discussions even mention the more than 90 occurrences in the book of Ezekiel. Certain facts about the use of this title in the New Testament are very remarkable. Although it occurs more than 80 times in the four gospels it is extremely rare in the rest of the New Testament. It never appears in the epistles that are commonly believed to have been written by Paul, Peter, James, John, or Jude, and only once in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 7:56 -- the words of Stephen shortly before his death). Each of the gospel verses in which it occurs is a statement by Christ in which He uses the term to refer to Himself (including John 12:34, where His words are quoted by others). Most of the critical scholars claim that a great many of the verses in which "son of man" occurs really originated in the early church and were never spoken by Jesus, but such claims do not rest on any solid evidence, and the non-use of the term in the speeches in Acts and in the various New Testament epistles speaks strongly against it. It should also be mentioned that its use in the gospels is very different

from its use the writings of the church of the early centuries. When the phrase occurs in Christian writings after the first century it is used to mean that Jesus Christ was not only God but also fully man, a usage that is very different from the way it is used in the gospels. For Jesus to apply to Himself a title that would merely call attention to the fact that He was really human would have no meaning in the situations described in the gospel accounts. As he preached and taught no one would question that he was human.

There are two poles around which recent critical interpretations of Jesus' use of the term "Son of Man" have largely revolved. At least one of these can be traced back to Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

Schweitzer said that Jesus used the expression "Son of Man" to refer to his Messianic office "as destined to be realized at His 'coming', and did so in such a manner that only the initiated understood that He was speaking of His own coming, but others understood Him as referring to the coming of a Son of Man who was other than Himself." ^6

He said that the passages where the title could not have this apocalyptic reference could be explained as "of literary origin."

Thus Schweitzer declared that some of the Son of Man passages would be understood by most of Jesus' listeners as referring to an apocalyptic being quite distinct from Jesus, who was expected to come to earth in a supernatural way and produce a great transformation.

Schweitzer's suggestion did not immediately attract great attention, perhaps because so much of his tremendous energy was soon transferred to musical and medical activities.

About 40 years later the famous German theologian, Rudolph Bultmann, expressed a view rather similar to that of Schweitzer, but much more radical. He said: "The synoptic Son of Man sayings fall into three groups, which speak of the Son of Man (1) as coming, (2) as suffering death and rising again, and (3) as now at work." He declared that "the first group alone contains very old tradition. The sayings belonging to it speak of the Son of

Man in the third person." He said that the second group consists of *vaticinia ex eventu*, pretended prophecies made after the predicted events had occurred, and were "probably later products of the Hellenistic church." He said that the third group owes its origin to incorrect translation into Greek, asserting that in the original Aramaic of these sayings "Son of Man" was not a title but merely a way of saying "man" or "I". Thus in Bultmann's view the only sayings that Jesus may have spoken in which the term "Son of Man" is used as a title are not about Jesus himself but about this expected apocalyptic figure.<sup>7</sup>

In subsequent years books and articles by many scholars presented a similar view.

Obviously this view depends on the assumption that most first-century Jews believed in the future coming of an apocalyptic figure called "the Son of Man." This assumption was based on three sources, the first of which was the brief reference to "one like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven" in Daniel 7:13. The assumption that all Jewish Bible readers would be greatly impressed by this occurrence of the term and would completely forget its altogether different usage in Daniel 8:17 as well as in its 91 occurrences in the book of Ezekiel taxes credulity to the utmost and is not supported by any historic evidence.<sup>8</sup>

The second alleged evidence for wide prevalence of such an idea in the first century was based on statements in the Similitudes (or Parables) of Enoch, which is one of the five divisions of the Ethiopic Book of Enoch (chapters 37-71). More than forty manuscripts of this book have been found, nearly all of them written in the fifteenth century or later. In the Book of Enoch the term "Son of Man" occurs only in the Similitudes.

In the Similitudes Enoch is twice addressed as "son of man," in line with the common use of the term in Ezekiel and with one of its two occurrences in Daniel (8:17). At these places the modern translators write the term without capitalization but elsewhere they begin it with capital letters since they understand it to refer to a great apocalyptic figure, closely associated with the great God and expected

eventually to come to earth and perform great deeds. (cf. 1 Enoch 46:3-4; 48:2; 60:10; 62:5-9, 14; 63:11; 69:27, 29; 70:1, 14-17.)

It is generally believed that the Ethiopic translation of the Book of Enoch was made from a Greek translation of a book originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic. Only a few parts of the Greek translation have come to light and these do not contain any part of the Similitudes. This led some investigators to question whether the Similitudes were actually part of the original Book of Enoch, or were perhaps written in the second century A.D. Such doubts are now greatly strengthened as a result of the discoveries at Qumran, where small fragments in Aramaic of just about every chapter in the Book of Enoch outside of the Similitudes have been found, but no part of any chapter in the Similitudes has turned up as yet. This has led various writers to think it probable that the Similitudes were not written until after the time of Christ and therefore could not have been an influence in first century Judaism.<sup>9</sup>

A third source has often been mentioned as evidence that such a belief was widely held in first century Judaism. Near the beginning of the 13th chapter of 2 Esdras (also called 4 Ezra) it is said that a "wind made something like the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea" and that "that man flew with the clouds of heaven." When a great multitude of the ungodly "were gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came up out of the sea . . . he sent forth from his mouth as it were a stream of fire . . . and burned them all up." Verse 32 says: "then my son will be revealed, whom you saw as a man coming up from the sea." Since this person is not called "son of man" but is designated simply as "like the figure of a man," and since it is now generally believed that 2 Esdras was not written until the last quarter of the first century, most scholars no longer refer to it as an evidence of widespread belief in an apocalyptic son of man during the lifetime of Jesus.

Thirty years ago most critical scholars held that all the genuine statements in the gospels about the son of man

referred to an expected eschatological figure. There was considerable variety of views as to the relation of this "son of man" to Jesus. Most of them held that he was quite distinct from Jesus. A. J. B. Higgins and John Knox made almost identical statements about this.

Higgins said: "How could a sane man have entertained such thoughts (in supposing himself to be the Son of Man) of himself?" And again: "The upshot is that if Jesus was acquainted with a belief of this kind he could hardly have regarded himself, a man on earth, as the Son of Man and have been sane. His references to the Son of Man must all have been directed as if to another than himself ... Jesus said nothing whatever about himself as the Son of Man."<sup>10</sup> In 1958 John Knox had made an almost identical statement. He asked: "Would it be psychologically possible for a sane person to think of himself as either the Enochian Son of man, the Danielic Son of man, or 'the Man' in what I should be inclined to call the later Pauline sense?". . . "A sane person, not to say a good person, just could not think of himself in such a way.". . . "We repeat our conclusion that a sane man could hardly have entertained such thoughts about himself.". . . "One may argue that in Jesus' place and time such self-deception was compatible with sanity (although I wonder again if a really comparable case can be found) -- but that does not make it any the less truly self deception. If Jesus was divine in a way to make psychologically plausible his consciousness of being the apocalyptic Son of man, one would suppose that he would also have been divinely aware that there was no apocalyptic Son of man."<sup>11</sup>

Numerous articles appeared, most of them giving at least a measure of support to this interpretation, but in recent years more and more scholars have expressed doubts about it. Thus an article appeared in 1971-2 by R. Leivestad called "Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man."<sup>12</sup> In 1975-6 an article by B. Lindars called "Re-enter the Apocalyptic Son of Man" appeared in the same magazine.<sup>13</sup> Although the title seemed directly to contradict that of Leivestad's article, the difference proved, on reading the article, to be more apparent

than real. Since that time Lindars' thought has moved so much further in that direction that in 1983 he published a book called, *Jesus, Son of Man*, in which he said:

"The irony of this is that the idea that there was a myth of the Son of Man in the time of Christ itself turns out to be a myth, created, not by the thinkers of New Testament times, but by modern critical scholarship.^14

Although critical scholars are tending to abandon the view which was so generally held in the middle part of this century, A. J. B. Higgins has written a new book on the subject, in which he tenaciously holds to the ideas that so many critics are now abandoning.^15

Recently another view has come more and more to the fore among critics. Like the view discussed above it cannot be spoken of as new, since it had already been presented by A. Meyer near the turn of the century, though it was almost entirely neglected until recently. Meyer declared that in the Galilean Aramaic of the time of Jesus "son of man" was merely a common way of saying "I" ^16 Gustaf H. Dalman, to whom many writers refer as "the then great expert on Aramaic," declared that there is not sufficient evidence for believing that the phrase was generally used this way during the first century A.D.^17 and careful examination of the alleged evidence supports Dalman's conclusion.

A particularly strong reason for questioning Meyer's view can be derived from the fact that there is no evidence in the Gospels that any one else ever used the phrase as a substitute for the pronoun of the first person, though most of Jesus' disciples were Galileans. At more than 80 places in the Gospels Jesus uses it in referring to Himself, but there is not even one place where anyone else, man or woman, Galilean or Judean, ever uses such a phrase in similar fashion. There is only one place in the historical books of the New Testament (the Gospels and Acts) where "son of man" occurs without being a quotation from Jesus Himself, and that is where Stephen uses it to refer to Jesus.

In 1971 Geza Vermes, who is now the most active proponent of this view, wrote a supplement to the 3rd



edition of Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*,<sup>18</sup> in which he quoted statements from rabbinic writings and Targums from the 3rd and 4th centuries in which the term "that man" was used by someone with reference to himself (mostly, however, representing "man" by *gabra* instead of *enasha*) as alleged proof that in the Galilean Aramaic of the first century "son of man" was only a way of saying "I". Vermes summarized his view in his book, *Jesus the Jew* (London, 1973)<sup>19</sup> and repeated a strong defense of it in his article, "The 'Son of Man' Debate" JSNT (1978) 19-32.

As mentioned above, "son of man" is occasionally used in the Old Testament with the simple meaning "man." Vermes largely bases his claim that it was commonly used as a substitute for the first person singular pronoun in the first century A. D. on a few occurrences of the term, or of the words "that man," in later rabbinic documents or in Targums. The relevance of his instances may be questioned because many of them use the word *gabra* rather than *enasha* and also because most of them are joined with a demonstrative, "that." Besides most of Vermes' alleged instances come from the third or fourth century, A. D., and their value as proof of a supposed first-century usage may be questioned.

A number of Vermes' instances are merely statements of a general nature with "a son of man" standing for "a man," -- even if application to the one speaking is intended. It is as if one of us, facing a difficult situation, were to say: "What's a man to do!" Such a quotation would hardly be acceptable as evidence that in American English "a man" is a common way of saying "I"!

Thus the many statements by recent critics that Jesus did not use "Son of Man" as a title prove to have no basis in solid fact.

### Notes

- <sup>^1</sup> The plural form of this expression occurs 43 times, 20 of them in Psalms and 9 in Ecclesiastes. In 25 of these occurrences the NIV renders the phrase simply as "men."
- <sup>^2</sup> R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1971) pp. 169-70.
- <sup>^3</sup> In these verses the KJV differs from the NIV by translating *p<sup>ē</sup>lah* as "serve" instead of "worship" but at every occurrence of *p<sup>ē</sup>lah* in biblical Aramaic the context indicates that religious service or worship is meant.
- <sup>^4</sup> Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich, 1922) I, p. 956.
- <sup>^5</sup> J. P. Lange, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, original German, 1857 (English translation, Grand Rapids, n.d.) p. 160.
- <sup>^6</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: Adam and Charles Black; 2nd English ed., 1911) 2nd Eng. ed., 1911) p. 282.
- <sup>^7</sup> Rudolph Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, Vol. I, p. 30, Eng. trans. 1951.
- <sup>^8</sup> As an extreme example of critical dogmatism we may note that Hans Conzelmann, a follower of Bultmann, declares: "Ezekiel is irrelevant for the question of the historical derivation of the title." (*An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, 1969, p. 132.) Conzelmann does not even mention its use in Daniel 8:17.
- <sup>^9</sup> J. T. Milik, HTR 64 (1971) pp. 333-378; J. T. Milik, *Ten Years of Discovery in the Wilderness of Judea*, (London: SCM Press, 1st Eng. ed., 1959), p. 33; E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* ed. by James H. Charlesworth (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1983), Vol. I, p. 7; J. C. Hindley, "Towards a Date for the Similitudes of Enoch. An Historical Approach," NTS, 14 (1967-68), p. 553. 10
- <sup>^10</sup> A. J. B. Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man*. 1964, pp. 19, 199-200.
- <sup>^11</sup> John Knox, *The Death of Christ*, 1958, pp. 63-4, 65, 67, 71-2.
- <sup>^12</sup> R. Leivestad, "Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man," NTS, 18 (1972) p. 246;

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- <sup>13</sup> Barnabas Lindars, "Re-enter the Apocalyptic Son of Man," NTS 22 (1975), pp. 53, 58.
- <sup>14</sup> Barnabus Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man*, SPCK London, 1983; American edition, Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1984, p. 8.
- <sup>15</sup> A. J. B. Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus*. Cambridge University Press. 1980.
- <sup>16</sup> Meyer's book, *Jesu Muttersprache*, is summarized by S. R. Driver, in his article, "Son of Man," in James Hastings, *A Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1902) IV, 581.
- <sup>17</sup> Gustav Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1902, p. 249f.
- <sup>18</sup> Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*. 3rd edition, 1967.
- <sup>19</sup> Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: a historian's reading of the gospels*. Frontier Press. Philadelphia, 1981.

## **Daniel 8 -- A Great Crisis Predicted**

As we have seen, each of the visions described in Daniel 2 and 7 pictures the successive rise of four kingdoms, followed by their complete destruction and replacement by a universal kingdom of righteousness. Daniel 7 gave further details at a number of points and made an important addition by predicting that God's people would face a great crisis during the latter part of the life of the fourth kingdom. This crisis would be produced by the rise of a "little horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully," which would be "waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came." Then the saints would be given the kingdom.

At first sight there is considerable similarity between this part of Daniel 7 and the principal subject of Daniel 8, which also describes a great crisis in which God's people would face terrible calamities, a crisis which would also be caused by the activity of a "horn." The question naturally arises whether the two chapters describe the same crisis. Indeed such a conclusion lies at the center of the theory presented by Porphyry and held by liberal critics today. This view, which we have called the Maccabean interpretation, holds that the book was not written in the time of Nebuchadnezzar but about 350 years later, during the latter part of the Hellenistic kingdom, and that the purpose of the entire book was to prepare God's people for the great crisis described in detail in chapter 8. Those who believe that the book was written in the time of Nebuchadnezzar readily

grant that one of its main purposes was to prepare God's people for the great crisis to be produced by Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes in the latter part of the Hellenistic period, but insist that Daniel 7 points to a different crisis, which has not yet occurred. A few Christian interpreters have made the same error in the opposite direction, considering that chapter 8, like chapter 7, points to the great enemy of God's people who will appear near the end of the fourth kingdom.

Though differing in some respects from chapter 2 and chapter 7, chapter 8 has features in common with each of them. Like chapter 2 it presents in its entirety a symbolic picture of future events and then gives an interpretation. Like chapter 7 it includes the interpretation as part of the vision. In chapter 2 the entire vision was symbolic and the entire interpretation was in plain language. In chapter 7 these elements were mixed at a few points. In chapter 8 most of the picture is symbolical (though a few elements in the vision are difficult to consider as merely symbols), and most of the interpretation is in plain language. The chapter has a rather unique feature, that several elements contained in the vision are not explained in the interpretation, while the interpretation adds a number of features not mentioned in the vision.

The first 14 verses of chapter 8 describe Daniel's vision. The rest of the chapter gives the interpretation. These two parts will be quoted in parallel columns below.

INTRODUCTION TO VISION	INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETATION
(1) In the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, I, Daniel had a vision, after the one that had already appeared to me.	(15) While I, Daniel was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man.
(2) In my vision I saw myself in the citadel of Susa* in the province of	(16) And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, "Gabriel, tell this man the

Elam; in the vision I was beside the Ulai Canal.	meaning of the vision." (17) As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. "Son of man," he said to me, "understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.* (18) While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet. (19) He said: "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath,* because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.*
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Verse 1 indicates that Daniel received this vision two years after the one described in chapter 7. He seemed in this vision to be "in the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam." Susa<sup>1</sup> was the ancient capital of Elam, which had been an independent country until its conquest by the Assyrians at about 640 B.C. After the destruction of the Assyrian empire Elam belonged to the Medes. Later Susa became one of the royal cities of the Persian empire and most of the important events described in the book of Esther occurred in or near its palace. The fact that Daniel would seem in his vision to be at this foreign location, which he had probably visited on diplomatic trips, is already a suggestion of great changes ahead.

After Daniel received the vision he wondered what it meant. Verses 15-19 tell us that the Lord sent Gabriel to explain it. Gabriel addressed Daniel as "son of man," using

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\*See discussion of these terms on p. 152-153

this term in the common meaning that occurs so often in Ezekiel. (See discussion on p.112)

This chapter, like chapter 7 predicts political history through animal symbolism.

THE RAM	PERSIA
(3) I looked up, and there before me was a ram with two horns, standing beside the canal, and the horns were long. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later. (4) I watched the ram as he charged toward the west and the north and the south. No animal could stand against him, and none could rescue from his power. He did as he pleased and became great.	(20) The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia.

The picture in verses 3 and 4 is a vivid representation of the conquests of Cyrus the Great which put an end to the Babylonian empire. The statement in verse 20 that "the two horned ram . . . represents the kings of Media and Persia" parallels the references to "the laws of the Medes and Persians" in Esther 1:19 and in Daniel 6:8, 12 and 15 and contradicts the critical theory that the second and third animals in chapter 7 represent separate Median and Persian empires. This part of the vision parallels the second part of the image in Daniel 2 and the second animal in chapter 7. Verse 3 describes an unusual feature about the ram. One of its two horns was longer than the other, and the longer one grew up later. This feature, which may parallel the statement in 7:5 that the bear was raised up on one of its sides, clearly points to the history of the Medo-Persian empire. For a time the Medes had seemed far more

important than the Persians, but under Cyrus the Persians became predominant. This change occurred at about the time when Daniel received this vision, and would give him assurance that the rest of the prophecy would be fulfilled.

In the following years Cyrus led his armies westward through the area north of the Babylonian empire. Then he marched north and conquered all of Asia Minor. After doing so he returned and went further south, eventually taking possession of Babylon itself. This part of his career is vividly symbolized in verse 4.

It might be asked how the references in verse 4 to west, north and south as directions in which the ram was pushing could be harmonized with the idea of a symbolic dream. Yet the answer to this question is not difficult, since Daniel seemed in his vision to be standing beside the Ulai Canal. As he was already familiar with the area the position of the canal would make the directions obvious.

Although these conquests by Cyrus were followed by others in the east, the east is not mentioned, since the purpose of the vision was to point out the supplanting of the Babylonian empire by that of Persia. In this connection it would be well to call attention again to the danger of unjustifiable arguments from silence. Whatever the Bible clearly states can be taken as true. When the Bible does not mention something it may mean that the thing not mentioned did not occur, or there may be some other reason, as here, for the omission.

THE RAM OVERCOME BY THE GOAT	GREECE
(5) As I was thinking about this, suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came from the west, crossing the whole earth without touching the ground. (6) He came toward the two-horned ram I had	(21) The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king.



seen standing beside the canal and charged at him in great rage. (7) I saw him attack the ram furiously, striking the ram and shattering his two horns. The ram was powerless to stand against him; the goat knocked him to the ground and trampled on him, and none could rescue the ram from his power.	
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These verses give a vivid picture of one of the greatest and most unexpected overturnings in world history. More than two centuries passed between what is represented in verse 4 and what is represented in verse 5. Ten years before Alexander the Great attacked the Persian empire, that empire seemed to be at the height of its power and demonstrated this by its reconquest of Egypt, which had gained its freedom nearly a century before. Suddenly an unexpected force came from the west -- a force that the interpretation identifies as "the king of Greece." These verses vividly portray the rise of the Hellenistic empire. The conquests of Cyrus were very great and comparatively rapid, but the progress of Alexander the Great as he led his armies east from Macedon two hundred years later would be far more rapid. In only twelve years he brought the entire Persian empire to his feet. The mention of the prominent horn between the eyes of the goat points to Alexander's preeminence in the whole undertaking.

There is considerable evidence of contact between Greece and Babylon at the time of Belshazzar, but it is very unlikely that anyone living at that time would have thought it possible, apart from divine revelation, that distant Greece could ever topple an Asiatic empire.

THE BREAKING OF THE LARGE HORN	THE BEGINNING OF THE HELLENISTIC KINGDOMS
(8) The goat became very great, but at the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the winds of heaven.	(22) The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but four will not have the same power.

These verses were fulfilled when Alexander the Great died at the very summit of his power. The reference to the "winds of heaven" may suggest the fact that after his death his generals would fight for nearly 40 years as one after another would try to gain control over the entire empire. It eventually would become divided into three great lasting kingdoms<sup>2</sup> and a number of smaller ones, such as Bithynia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Pergamum, and Bactria. The picture in verse 8 of four prominent horns toward the four winds of heaven is a good summary statement.

The third kingdom is represented in chapter 2 as a unified portion of the statue, and is typified in chapter 7 by a single animal, though it existed as a unit for less than 30 years. Yet we can speak of it as one kingdom since this so called Hellenistic age was a period when one language and culture was dominant over a wide area and characterized the leadership of all the separate kingdoms formed out of Alexander's empire.

Alexander himself had wished to make one people out of the many diverse nations he had conquered. He married a Persian wife and induced many of his associates to follow his example. Everywhere he went he founded new cities on the Greek model, and this practice was continued by the rulers of the great dynasties that were established after his death. Soon there were cities all through their domains bearing such names as Alexandria, Philippi, Seleucia, and Antioch. Even the kingdom of Bactria in the area now called

Afghanistan was long ruled by Greek kings who emphasized Greek customs and culture.

These facts were predicted by statements in verse 22 that the new kingdoms "will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power." Although the territory included in most of these kingdoms consisted entirely of land that had been ruled by the Persians, and only one of them included any sizable amount of land that had been Greek or Macedonian before Alexander's conquest, the leadership of all of them was Greek or Macedonian, and the political and social culture of the whole area underwent great modification.

The statement "but will not have the same power" (v. 22) is a good summary of what would occur when Alexander's generals began to fight among themselves. The various generals seized each other's territory and fought back and forth, one after another assuming supremacy for a brief time. Although they were able generals and powerful men, no one of them displayed more than a fraction of the ability, leadership and power that Alexander exercised during his brief life. As the Persians had thoroughly organized the vast area that Cyrus had conquered, and its people were now accustomed to being governed by foreigners, the change to Greek domination was easily made. In most portions of this immense region the local people took little part in the many conflicts during the 40 years that followed Alexander's death.

Up to this point the material in chapter 8 has closely paralleled the brief statements in chapters 2 and 7 about the second and third kingdoms. Some important historical details about these kingdoms have been added and the identity of the two kingdoms has been definitely established.

In Nebuchadnezzar's vision in chapter 2 it was rather obvious that an important part of the purpose for telling about the four kingdoms was to lead up to the second phase of the fourth kingdom and the following destruction of the statue and establishment of a new universal regime. In chapter 7 an important part of the purpose of the survey of the four kingdoms was to lead up to the activity of the

little horn that would come out of the fourth kingdom, and to the complete destruction of the fourth beast and the establishment of a new universal regime. The purpose in chapter 8 is quite different, for it reaches its climax in predicting the career of a wicked man who would come from the third kingdom, and says nothing about events that would occur after that time.

After verse 8 more than a century is passed over in silence. There is no reference to this interval in the account of the vision, but it is suggested in the interpretation by the phrase "in the latter part of their reign" (v. 23). The remaining portion of chapter 8 deals with one of the greatest crises in the history of God's people -- the attempt of a Hellenistic king, who ruled one of the sections of the third empire, to force the Jews to abandon their religion and worship heathen gods.

Those who hold the Maccabean view insist that chapters 7 and 8 both relate to Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes, who attempted to destroy the Jewish customs and the Jewish religion. On the face of it this identity appears unlikely, since the evil figure in Daniel 7 comes from the fourth kingdom, while the one to whom the rest of chapter 8 is devoted comes from the third kingdom.

It has become customary to refer to the great enemy of God described in Daniel 7 as "the little horn," although the term "little horn" occurs only once in the King James Version of that chapter (7:8). The fact that the KJV uses the same phrase in Daniel 8:9 suggests that in chapter 8 the same person is being described. It is therefore important to recognize that the terminology in chapter 8 is very different. This fact is clearly brought out in the translation in the NIV. In Daniel 7:8, instead of saying "another little horn," like the KJV, the NIV says "another horn, a little one" -- a translation that is not only closer to the original but also more logical. In Daniel 8:9 the Hebrew original does not say "a little horn" but "a horn from littleness." The Hebrew preposition *min*, which is generally translated "from" is also often used in comparisons and in such cases is usually translated "than." This latter is the interpretation that was

taken by both of the early Greek translations, which there fore rendered the phrase as "a strong horn," in striking contrast to the KJV translation. In Daniel 8:9 the probable meaning of the original is well expressed in the NIV which calls it "another horn, which started small." The use of the figure "horn" for each of two great anti-God figures is hardly a reason to consider them as identical.

The rest of chapter 8 is devoted to the career of this "horn." We shall print the text of the vision and that of the interpretation in parallel columns. Arranging them in this way makes obvious the marked difference from chapters 2 and 7, where the interpretation followed the vision fairly closely. In chapter 8 the vision has a number of statements with no corresponding words in the interpretation and the interpretation adds a number of facts not mentioned in the vision. We shall leave a space wherever a statement in one column does not parallel a statement in the same order in the other column. Where there is a parallel or a near parallel in a different section this will be indicated by a note. For easy reference the sections will be numbered consecutively in a middle column.

THE GREAT CRISIS PICTURED	THE GREAT CRISIS DESCRIBED
(9) Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and to the east and toward the Beautiful Land. (10) It grew until it reached the host of the heavens, and it threw some of the	1 (23) In the latter part of their reign, 2 when rebels have become completely wicked, (cf. sec. 15) 3 a stern-faced king, a master of intrigue will arise. 4 (24) He will become very strong, but not by his own power, 5 6 He will cause astounding devastation

<p>starry host down to the earth and trampled on them. (cf. also sections 8 and 11)</p>	<p>7 and will succeed in whatever he does. (cf. sec. 17)              8 He will destroy the mighty men and the holy people (cf. sec. 6 and sec. 16)              9 (25) He will cause deceit to prosper. (cf. sec. 18)              10 and will consider himself superior              11 When they feel secure, he will destroy many (cf. sec. 6)</p>
<p>(11) It set itself up to be as great as the Prince of the host; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was brought low.              (12) Because of rebellion, the host of the saints, and the daily sacrifice were given over to it.              It prospered in everything it did, (cf. sec. 7)              and truth was thrown to the ground.</p>	<p>12 and take his stand against the Prince of princes.              13              14              15              16              17              18              19 Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power.</p>
<p>(13) Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled -- the vision concerning the daily</p>	<p>20</p>

<p>sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?"</p> <p>(14) He said to me, "It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated."</p>	<p>21(26) "The vision of the evenings and mornings that has been given you is true,</p> <p>22 but seal up the vision, for it concerns the distant future."</p>
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Until the end of verse 9 almost everything in the vision was symbolic, except for the directions mentioned in verse 4 and verse 9. Verse 10 is still symbolic, though one wonders how a horn on the head of a goat would be represented in the vision as reaching up to heaven to pull down some of the stars to the ground and trample on them. In contrast, verse 11 seems entirely literal, with its references to the Prince of the Host, to the removal of the daily sacrifice and to the place of his sanctuary being brought low. It is hard to imagine how all this was represented in the vision. The same is true of verse 12, which very strongly gives the impression that it is describing the activities of a man rather than those of an animal's horn. The actual vision contains no indication that the horn will be destroyed, but this fact is added in section 19 of the interpretation.

### **The Fulfillment in History**

It is agreed by all interpreters that both the vision and the interpretation, though generally using terms that are somewhat vague, exactly fit the career of Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned over the Seleucid empire from 175 to 164/3 B.C. We shall now examine some of the statements

about his reign, as enumerated in the chart. Our present survey of the facts will be limited to statements in chapter 8, since his career will be discussed in more detail in our consideration of chapter 11.

Section 1 points to the fact that nearly a century and a half passed between the death of Alexander and the time when Antiochus became king.

Section 2 probably alludes to the fact that many Jews were departing from the religion of their fathers. Even before Antiochus took the throne Greek customs had been introduced into Jerusalem and Hellenism had begun to attract many of the younger Jews. At first Antiochus moved very carefully, seeking to wean the Israelites away from their devotion to God. He bestowed special honors on those who adopted Greek customs and many found it desirable to seek the king's favor by abandoning the practices of their fathers.

The meaning of the statement "which started small but grew in power" would have been quite clear to men living in the Seleucid empire when Antiochus became king. No one expected Antiochus to succeed his brother, Seleucus IV, whose sons naturally had a prior claim to the throne.

As a young man Antiochus had been sent to Rome as one of the hostages the Romans had demanded after defeating his father, Antiochus III.<sup>3</sup> When his older brother, Seleucus IV, became king the Romans naturally insisted that the oldest son of Seleucus be sent to Rome in his place. Being now free to leave Rome, Antiochus went to Athens and became an Athenian citizen. About ten years later Seleucus IV was murdered and his assassins attempted to rule in the name of an infant son, since the legitimate heir was a hostage in distant Rome. It probably never occurred to them that Antiochus, who had become chief magistrate of Athens, might be a hindrance to their plans. To their great surprise, he succeeded in destroying them and becoming king himself. Thus "he started small but grew in power" (v. 4).

It did not become apparent that Antiochus was "a stern-faced king" (section 3) until he had reigned for a time. At first he used peaceful measures to advance his policy, but



soon he began to show both his sternness and his bent toward intrigue.

In section 4 of the interpretation it was pointed out that he would not become great by his own power. When his brother was assassinated he immediately entered into negotiations with Eumenes, king of Pergamum, who had previously been hostile to the Seleucids. Evidently he was able to convince Eumenes that if he became king he would reverse the former policy. The king of Pergamum lent him considerable money and sent an army to escort him to the area that still belonged to the Seleucids. By intrigue, scheming and deceit he persuaded the people to receive him as king and to ignore the rights of his nephew, who was still in Italy.

Section 5 suggests his military campaigns against Egypt and against eastern regions that were trying to gain freedom from Seleucid control. It is noticeable that the section does not mention north or west. Antiochus IV did not conduct any campaigns in those directions and made no attempt to reconquer any of the areas in Asia Minor or Europe that his ancestors had held.

This section ends with the words "toward the Beautiful Land." All agree that this is a reference to Palestine, which had been acquired by Antiochus' father a few years earlier. Neither the Ptolemies nor the Seleucids had interfered with the religious life of Palestine until this time, but Antiochus determined to introduce Greek customs among the Israelites and to wean them away from the law of their God. At first he made considerable headway, but when he found that many were determined to cling to the religion and customs of their fathers he began to show the fierce character described in section 3.

The vivid picture in section 6 of the horn casting some of the stars to the ground and trampling on them is a good representation of the way Antiochus' later activities would appear to godly Jews, when he began actually to persecute them and to slaughter many of those who opposed his desires. The fact that he was successful for a considerable time is indicated by the statements in sections 7 and 17.

Sections 10 and 12 state that he considered himself superior and took his stand against the Prince of princes. The phrases "Prince of the host" and "Prince of princes" undoubtedly refer to the true God, against whom Antiochus stood up. He declared himself to be a god, adopting the name Epiphanes, which means "the manifest god." Previous kings had taken similar titles, but Antiochus, by using this name on his coins, greatly stressed his claim to be divine.

Section 11 says that he will destroy many "when they feel secure." This may well be a definite prediction of an event described in the first chapter of 1 Maccabees (vv. 29-32). Antiochus sent a contingent of soldiers to Jerusalem with orders to pretend to be making a friendly visit, but suddenly to fall upon the people, killing many and seizing control.

When the pious Israelites resisted Antiochus' innovations, he instituted severe persecutions. Eventually, as pointed out in sections 13-16, he put a stop to the regular services of the temple, desecrated it by placing a statue of Jupiter in front of the sacred altar, and ordered that the people offer swine as a sacrifice to this heathen god, so polluting the temple that no faithful Jew could worship there.

In Hebrew the word translated "daily sacrifice" (sections 13, 16 and 20) simply means "the continual." The KJV interpreted it as pointing only to the daily sacrifices, and it was frequently used in this sense in the Talmud, which was written in the early centuries of the Christian era. However, many modern interpreters take it as including all the regular ceremonies of the temple.

The words in section 18, "truth was thrown to the ground," could be understood as a general statement of Antiochus' opposition to God's law. It is more likely, however, that they refer to the fact, stated in I Maccabees 1:56-57, that he seized and destroyed many copies of the Scriptures.

Soon Antiochus gave orders that everyone in the land of Israel should be compelled to sacrifice to heathen gods and to abandon God's law. The penalty for disobedience was death. After many pious Israelites had been killed by the king's representatives, others began to flee into the

wilderness. Soon a considerable number of these refugees accepted the leadership of a pious priest and his five sons. Beginning with small guerrilla raids these men gradually increased their number and extended their power. Eventually they succeeded in recapturing Jerusalem and cleansing the temple. After Antiochus' death his successors tried in vain to bring Judea again under Seleucid control. For about a century the Jewish state was completely independent.

Chapter 8 says nothing about the Maccabean uprising, though the words of the two "holy ones" (sections 20 and 21) indicate that Antiochus' efforts would ultimately fail. Toward the end of his reign Antiochus led an expedition to the east. He was not killed in battle or as a result of an uprising, but suffered a nervous disorder which caused his death. Section 19 summarizes this fact by the words, "he will be destroyed but not by human power."

Section 21 declares that the interruption of the temple ceremonies will continue for "2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated." The phrase "evenings and mornings" (vv. 14 and 26) does not occur elsewhere in the Scripture. It reminds us of the frequent statement in Genesis 1, "and there was evening, and there was morning." Some have interpreted the daily sacrifice as referring only to a special sacrifice that was made each morning and each evening, and therefore have taken the phrase as representing this number of sacrifices and consequently meaning a total of 1150 days, but others regard the term evenings and mornings as indicating a complete day, thus considering the desecration as lasting 2300 days.

The apocryphal book of First Maccabees, though not inspired, is generally considered to be a dependable historical source for the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the years that followed. I Maccabees 4:52 states that the temple was cleansed and the regular sacrifices reestablished on the 25th day of the ninth month, the month Kislev, in the year 148 of the Seleucid era. This era had begun when Seleucus returned victoriously to Babylon in 312/311 B.C. Since the year was considered to begin at various months in different

areas and in different periods of time, authorities differ as to whether the temple service was reestablished in 165 or 164 B.C. Whichever it was, it can give a date for the end of the 1150 or 2300 days, but there is at present no way to determine the exact time when the desecration should be considered as beginning. Antiochus' persecution of the Jewish religion did not start with one decisive act but with various steps instituted over a period of time. Probably those who saw the temple service reestablished could recognize some particular point as having been the beginning of "the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot." It is doubtful, however, that anyone could be sure, ahead of time, as to which of several incidents would be the one that would begin the 1150 or 2300 days. Believers in the Scripture would know that the persecution would continue for several years. They would be sure that in the end God would enable His people to reestablish the full temple worship but would not be able to predict the exact time when their efforts would succeed.

In this regard the prediction is similar to most Bible predictions in which time is involved. They are intended to lead God's people to serve Him with patient perseverance and they sometimes give a general idea of the length of time that a crisis will exist. They are rarely so stated as to make it possible to know exactly how or when God will accomplish His purposes, though sometimes, as here, they enable God's people to look back afterwards and see how precisely the prophecy has been fulfilled. This principle should be kept in mind when we look at the chronological statements in chapter 9 and in chapter 12. After he finished his interpretation, Gabriel said: "Seal up the vision for it concerns the distant future." Daniel was not to make the vision public immediately, but simply to include it in his book. By the time it became available to others its first part would already have been fulfilled, for the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus (pictured by the ram in vv. 3-4) occurred before Daniel received the next vision (ch. 9).

When the book began to be widely read people would have seen this evidence of its truth and could know that the terrible days pictured in the latter part of chapter 8 were still in the distant future.

The conquests of Alexander the Great (represented by the goat from the west) occurred two centuries after Daniel wrote. Another century and a half passed before the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Thus the greater part of the vision was not fulfilled until more than three centuries after Daniel received it, but its warnings and its promises of ultimate deliverance would prepare God's people for the great crisis described in this chapter.

### Notes

- <sup>^1</sup> This name appears in the KJV as Shushan, following the Hebrew writing, which may preserve the local pronunciation. The Assyrians and the later Greeks, unfamiliar with the sound *sh*, pronounced it Susa.
- <sup>^2</sup> It has been suggested that a kingdom of Thrace was sufficiently important to rank with the great kingdoms of Macedonia, Syria and Egypt, but I have been unable to find any historical evidence of the existence of such a kingdom during the period from 280 to 180 B.C.
- <sup>^3</sup> See pp. 224-238

## Is Antichrist in Chapter 8

It would seem natural to consider all of chapter 8 as having been fulfilled at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, since there is no difficulty in finding definite correspondence between the known facts about this Seleucid king and most of the statements in the chapter, whether contained in the vision that Daniel saw or in the interpretation that he heard from Gabriel. Yet many writers have said that the chapter includes predictions about the Antichrist who is to appear shortly before the second coming of Christ, some even asserting that Antichrist is its principal subject.<sup>1</sup> It therefore becomes important to examine this question.

Since the first epistle of John designates many enemies of God as antichrists (1 Jn. 2:18), there is certainly a sense in which Antiochus Epiphanes, the great enemy of God's people described in Daniel 8, can be called an antichrist.

In recent years, however, the term "Antichrist" has come to be generally restricted to the figure that Paul calls "the man of lawlessness" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. As we have seen, this "Antichrist" is specifically predicted in Daniel 7. One reason for the idea that he is also predicted in Daniel 8 is the fact that in the KJV both chapters speak of a "little horn." Yet, as we have seen, the Aramaic phrase in chapter 7 and the Hebrew phrase in chapter 8 are quite different (as is apparent in the NIV rendering).<sup>2</sup>

A still more important reason for being careful not to confuse the two is the fact that the horn in chapter 7 comes out of the fourth kingdom, while the one in chapter 8

comes out of the Grecian kingdom, which is identified with the third kingdom of chapters 2 and 7.

It is reasonable to hold that in chapter 7 Daniel looks forward to a great crisis shortly before the end of the age, but that in chapter 8 he looks forward to a different crisis which would appear very distant from his viewpoint, since he lived more than three centuries before the time of Antiochus, though very far in the past from our present viewpoint. Thus God gave predictions of two different crises.

The first part of Daniel's vision (vv. 3-9) and the corresponding part Antiochus (v. 9) and of the corresponding part of the interpretation (v. 23) are closely tied to the verses that precede and in each case it is easy to see an exact correspondence between the following verses (vv. 9b-14 and vv. 23b-25) and the historical records that describe the career of Antiochus.

In view of these facts the present writer is convinced that Daniel 8 deals exclusively with the predicted crisis under Antiochus.

Yet there is evidence that as early as the fifth century after Christ there were interpreters who considered the chapter to deal primarily with the future Antichrist. At this point in his commentary Jerome said: "Most of our commentators refer this passage to the Antichrist, and hold that that which occurred under Antiochus was only by way of a type which shall be fulfilled under Antichrist."<sup>3</sup>

What Jerome said of the evangelical interpreters of his day is still largely true. Since most (probably all) of those who believe that the book was written by the prophet Daniel in the sixth century B.C. find Antichrist predicted in chapter 7 and in the latter part of chapter 11, many of them think that he must in some way be found in chapter 8, and only a few recognize that the entire chapter deals with the crisis produced by Antiochus.<sup>4</sup>

Jerome himself pointed out the remarkable agreement between the predictions in Daniel 8 and the events in the career of Antiochus. In the prologue of his Commentary (pp. 15-16) he said:

And because Porphyry saw that all these things had been fulfilled and could not deny that they had taken place, he overcame this evidence of historical accuracy by taking refuge in this evasion, contending that whatever is foretold concerning Antichrist at the end of the world was actually fulfilled in the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, because of certain similarities to things which took place at his time. But this very attack testifies to Daniel's accuracy. For so striking was the reliability of what the prophet foretold, that he could not appear to unbelievers as a predictor of the future, but rather a narrator of things already past.

Some writers say that the chapter is primarily about Antiochus, but that here Antiochus is a type of Antichrist. It is doubtless true that there are many similarities between Antiochus and Antichrist, but there is no Scriptural statement that one is a type of the other. I know of no other instance where it has been suggested that an extensive prediction of a future event is not only important for itself but also as a type of something still further in the future.<sup>6</sup> Such a method of interpretation can easily introduce confusion into the understanding of Scripture. It is much safer to consider each prediction as relating to one particular event, unless there is definite Scriptural authority for considering it as a type or symbol of something else. While it is not impossible that God might choose to give a conflate picture in which aspects of two events are blended together, passages where such a phenomenon might reasonably be suggested are extremely rare.

A few interpreters say that the vision itself is entirely fulfilled in the activities of Antiochus Epiphanes but that the explanation given by Gabriel is really an account of events or persons at a much later time.<sup>7</sup> To the present writer such a theory seems strange indeed. He finds it hard to believe that God would first give Daniel a vision of Antiochus Epiphanes and would then send Gabriel with orders to



explain the vision to him, and that Gabriel, instead of explaining it, would give a prediction about events at least two thousand years later. After all, God had said, "Tell this man the meaning of the vision" (v.16).

The idea that the interpretation deals with Antichrist is largely based on the words of Gabriel in verses 17 and 19:

(17) "Understand that the vision concerns the time of the end."

(19) "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end."

The argument rests mainly on the phrases, "the time of the end," "later in the time of wrath," and "the appointed time of end." It should be noted that, except for the phrase "later in the time of wrath" (KJV "the end of the indignation"), there is no definite article with any Hebrew noun in these phrases. The first and the third would be more accurately translated as "a time of end" and "an appointed time of end."

In the first and third of these phrases the word "end" represents the Hebrew word *ges*. It should be noted that in the Old Testament *ges* is often used in an indefinite sense. It is sometimes said that the word "end," even without an article, is a technical term for the end of the age. Such a statement has no basis in fact. Even with an article the word does not necessarily point to the period just before the return of Christ, as is evident from its use in Ezekiel 7:2, 3 and 6, where the context clearly shows that the prophet is speaking of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.

The assertion that *ges* and its Greek equivalent *telos* always point to the end of the present age is quite unwarranted. Both words occur frequently in Scripture, with considerable variety of meaning. Comparatively few of their occurrences have any reference to the time of Antichrist.

This is further illustrated by the wide range of *telos* in the

NT, where it often seems to point to a goal rather than to any particular period of time. Peter speaks of "receiving the end of your faith" (1 Pet. 1:9 KJV) and James says: "Ye...have seen the end of the Lord" (Jas. 5:11 KJV).

It has sometimes been said that the latter part of chapter 8 could not refer to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes "because nothing ended at that time." Yet it is not at all unreasonable to suggest that here "the time of wrath" (KJV "the indignation") designates a period of captivity of God's people. There have been many captivities. Leviticus 26 describes a cycle in which: 1) the people turn away from God; 2) God gives them into captivity to their enemies; 3) they remain in captivity for a time; 4) they repent of their sin and turn to God; 5) God hears them and delivers them. The book of judges describes a series of such periods of captivity, and in 2 Chronicles 6:36-39 Solomon referred to the possibility of a new one. The exile that began at the destruction of Jerusalem came to an end when Cyrus permitted those who desired to do so to return to the land of Israel, but the captivity continued. The people remained subject to every whim of the Persian kings for more than two centuries. After the Greek conquest of the Persian empire they were still in captivity, though now to the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt. After this domination had continued about a century a Seleucid king, Antiochus III, the father of Antiochus Epiphanes, took the Israelite homeland away from Egypt and it remained in Seleucid hands for about 30 years. Then the Jews revolted against the attempt of Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes to destroy their religion and within a few years they gained complete freedom from foreign control. Thus the captivity that began with Nebuchadnezzar's conquest ended soon after the death of Antiochus IV. (The independent Jewish state lasted about a century, until the Romans destroyed the Seleucid kingdom and then seized Judah and a new captivity began). Thus the phrase "the end of the indignation" could reasonably point to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. There is no reason why it should imply that anything in chapter 8 refers to the period of Antichrist.

Even though "end" is not a technical term, "time of end" might conceivably be so used, but examination of its occurrences does not indicate that this is the case. The phrase occurs nowhere in the Bible except in the book of Daniel. In addition to its use in 8:17 it occurs in 11:35, 11:40, 12:4 and 12:9. In most of these the context shows rather clearly that it is a general term rather than a technical designation for a particular period of time.

Daniel 8 contains a remarkable summary of great events that would follow Daniel's time, and gives a considerable amount of detail about Antiochus Epiphanes and the great crisis resulting from his activities. Further detail about this crisis is revealed in Daniel 11:21-35. There is nothing in chapter 8 that refers directly to events that in our day are still future, but much that should increase our faith in God as we realize His goodness in times past. Study of this chapter should enable us more accurately and fully to understand God's dealings with mankind and should be useful as a help in establishing principles for dealing with prophecies in Daniel that have not yet been fulfilled.

### Notes

- <sup>^1</sup> Arthur E. Bloomfield, *The End of the Days* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, Inc., 1961) pp. 163-178; G. H. Lang, *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel* (London: The Paternoster Press, 1950) pp. 109-118; Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Daniel* (Philadelphia: Rev. Clarence Larkin Est., 1920) pp. 140-41, 165, 247.
- <sup>^2</sup> 2 Cf. pp. 24-25 and 139.
- <sup>^3</sup> *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, trans. by Gleason Archer, 1958) P. 87.
- <sup>^4</sup> Renald E. Showers, *The Most High God* (West Collingswood, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Inc.) pp. 99-103; E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1949) pp. 170-181; C. C. Ryrie, *Ryrie Study Bible KJV* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976, 1978) p. 1235; Bert Hall, 'Daniel,' in *The Wesleyan Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969) pp. 539-542; C. F. Keil, *The Book of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Eng. trans., 1973 reprint) pp. 296, 313.

- <sup>^5</sup> H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (The Wartburg Press, 1949) p. 374; M. Unger, 'Daniel, Book of' in *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 3rd ed., 1966) P. 239; Leon Wood, *A Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), p. 223; Geoffrey King *Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966) pp. 132-37; F. A. Tatford, *The Climax of the Ages* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1933) pp. 140-43; Gleason L. Archer, Jr. 'Daniel' in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985) Vol. 7, pp. 98-99, 104, 106; Clarence Mason, *Prophetic Problems with Alternate Solutions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973) pp. 215-16; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971) pp. 190, 198; *The Criswell Study Bible* ed. by W. A. Criswell (Nashville: Thos. Nelson, 1979) pp. 992-3; Ronald S. Wallace, *The Message of Daniel* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979) pp. 139, 144-5. Also cf. *The NIV Study Bible* ed. by Kenneth Barker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985) p. 1312.
- <sup>^6</sup> See also discussion of types, pp. 53-55.
- <sup>^7</sup> H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on Daniel the Prophet* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 1911) pp. 147-150; William Kelly, *Notes on the Book of Daniel* (New York: Loizeaux Brothers, 7th ed., 1943) pp. 155-164; John C. Whitcomb, *Daniel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985) pp. 116-118.



## Daniel 9

Four verses of this chapter (often called "the prophecy of the seventy weeks") have caused as much discussion as any other four verses of prophecy in the entire Bible.

Many interpreters have adopted as a starting point the idea that these verses must necessarily point to the exact time of the first advent of Christ. It would certainly not be impossible for God to predict the exact year of a future event several centuries before it occurred. Yet such a prediction would be quite unique in Scripture. There is only one other biblical prediction that contains actual figures about the time when an event would occur in later centuries. That unique prediction is quoted in Genesis 15:13-16, where God tells Abraham that his descendants will be enslaved and mistreated 400 years but that in the fourth generation they will return to the land of Canaan. It is obvious that these figures are far from precise.

The idea that Daniel 9:24-27 pointed to the exact time when Christ would appear might conceivably be reached as a conclusion from careful study, but it is wrong to take it as a starting point. Proper method requires that we fully examine the pertinent words in the passage and see what can be definitely said about them. Then we should proceed carefully to interpret the parts of the prediction and to decide on their implications.

The four verses of prediction are preceded by 23 very interesting verses that show the occasion for giving the prophecy. Shortly after the conquest of Babylon Daniel

made a great prayer which God answered by sending the angel Gabriel to give him a message.

In verse 2 Daniel says that he "understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years" (cf. pp. 175-177). Feeling that the seventy-year period was about to reach its end, he prayed that God would fulfill the promise that Jerusalem would be rebuilt.

We find in Daniel's prayer no evidence that he was sure the period of wrath would soon come to an end, and we might wonder whether he would be greatly encouraged when he received the message that God gave in answer to his prayer. If one were simply to read from the middle of verse 26 to the end of the chapter he might feel that God's answer was only a prediction of further trouble.

Daniel was assured that he himself was "highly esteemed" (v. 23), but was told that "seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city" (v. 24). There is no definite statement to show whether this newly-revealed period would follow the seventy years, would include it, or would overlap with it.

### **The Length of the 70 Sevens**

Gabriel's message begins with a word that can be interpreted in various ways. This word, which the KJV translates as "weeks," is rendered in the NIV as "sevens." It is quite evident in the context that it does not refer to sevens of days, weeks, or months. There would seem to be only two possible interpretations: that it means a period of seven years, or that it means a period of indefinite length. It is a very common error in interpreting Scripture to attempt to make a decision at once about words or phrases that could be taken in more than one way and then to force other statements into conformity with the possibility that has been selected. It is far better to go through a passage carefully, noticing the various possible interpretations, but taking particular pains to see what elements in the passage

are so stated that there is clearly only one way to understand them, and then using these as solid points from which to proceed. Then one should examine various possibilities for the interpretation of the passage as a whole, being especially careful not to force into a preconceived mold any word or statement that is not clear. Therefore we shall make no attempt at this point to decide whether a "seven" here means a period of seven years or whether it is a period of indefinite length, but shall leave final decision on this matter until later, and shall use the terms "sevens" and "weeks" interchangeably in our discussion.

### **The Purpose of the 70 Sevens**

The first verse of Gabriel's prophecy (v. 24) reads as follows:

"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy."

The verse lists six purposes for which 70 'sevens' have been decreed. The first three refer to doing away with transgression, sin and wickedness; the fourth purpose is "to bring in everlasting righteousness." Thus we can definitely say that the end of sin and the establishment of "everlasting righteousness" are vital elements in the purpose of the 70 weeks. Several of these purposes have been interpreted in various ways, sometimes depending on the interpreter's presuppositions as to the meaning of the passage as a whole. In line with our desire to determine what is definite and certain before trying to decide matters on which differences of opinion are possible, interpretation of the last two purposes will be left to a special note, along with a more detailed consideration of the first, second, and fourth purposes (See p. 179ff).



The clearest and least debatable of the purposes listed is the third: "to atone for wickedness." The Hebrew verb *kapar* occurs dozens of times in the Old Testament in connection with the sacrificial system. Its presence here leaves no doubt that a major purpose of the 70 weeks is to fulfill the objective of the entire sacrificial system through the atonement of Christ by His death at Calvary.

The KJV renders the third purpose as "to make reconciliation for iniquity." Perhaps 300 years ago the term "make reconciliation" had the same meaning as is now carried by "atone," the usual rendering of *kapar*. The KJV translates this Hebrew word as "make atonement" 70 times and as "make reconciliation" or "reconcile" only 7 times. In the general usage of today a human being may try to reconcile another man to God by telling him of God's offer of pardon for sin through the sacrifice of Christ, but only God can make atonement, and this He did at Calvary in the person of His Son.

As rendered in the NIV and also in the KJV, three of the first four statements of purpose strongly suggest that the prophecy of the 70 weeks involves the complete end of the reign of sin and wickedness and the establishment of universal righteousness. This would seem to parallel the predictions in Daniel 2, 7 and 11-12. If so understood these purposes strongly suggest that the prophecy of the 70 weeks runs to the very end of the present age and I incline to think that anyone who approaches the passage without presuppositions will think this to be its obvious interpretation. Yet we must not immediately accept this conclusion as certain, for there are consecrated and highly trained Christian scholars who believe that these statements have been completely fulfilled by the removal of sin through what Christ did on the cross and by the establishment of the Christian church as an organism composed of people in whose hearts sin would no longer reign. Careful methodology requires us to avoid adopting any premature assumption, either that the present passage parallels the entire course of events described in chapters 2, 7, and 11-12, or that it does not. Before reaching a conclusion either way,

we should make a full and impartial examination of the entire passage.

### **The Three Segments**

(25) "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree<sup>a</sup> to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the<sup>b</sup> Anointed One,<sup>c</sup> the<sup>b</sup> ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. (26) After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the<sup>b</sup> Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. (27) He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. 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."<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> More literally, "word." See discussion below.

<sup>b</sup> There is no article with "anointed one" in v.25 or v.26, or with "ruler" in v. 25.

<sup>c</sup> Better, "an anointed one," as in NIV margin. See discussion below.

<sup>d</sup> In copies of the NIV published before 1984 this sentence was rendered differently. See discussion on p. 208ff.

Even a casual examination of these verses shows that they divide the 70 weeks into three parts. Verse 25 mentions a segment of seven 'sevens' and one of 62 'sevens'; the segment of 62 'sevens' is mentioned again in verse 26; verse 27 speaks of one 'seven' and refers to "the middle of that 'seven'." The fact that the total of 70 is made up of three segments, one of seven weeks, one of 62 weeks and a final

segment of one week, should be taken as a solid starting point in the interpretation of these verses.

Yet this fact has become so obscured that many evangelical discussions of the passage treat the 70 weeks as if there were only two segments instead of three. This twisting of the passage has not only affected commentaries, but even translations.

This misinterpretation has come about because of the assumption that the passage must point precisely to the time of Christ. Since it is obvious that seven periods of seven years could not reach to the coming of Christ from any date that might reasonably be taken as a starting point, this assumption caused a translation change as early as the latter part of the second century A.D., when Theodotion made a new translation of Daniel into Greek, and punctuated verse 25 in such a way as to run the first and second segments together. He also inserted the word "and" after the first mention of 62 'sevens', thus separating the "62 'sevens'" from the words that follow and implying that they should be joined to the preceding words. Most of the modern evangelical translations have followed Theodotion in changing the punctuation in this way, but they have not followed him in his insertion of "and" before "it will be rebuilt." As it stands in the Hebrew, the verse should be translated as follows:

Know and understand this: From the issuing of a word to restore and rebuild Jerusalem to an anointed one, a ruler, will be seven 'sevens'; and for sixty-two 'sevens' it will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.

Further evidence that verse 25 predicts two segments, one of seven 'sevens' reaching to the coming of an anointed one, and one of 62 'sevens' during which a rebuilt city will exist in times of trouble, may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Verse 26 begins with the words: "After the 62 'sevens.'" If verse 25 had described only one segment, 69 weeks

in length, verse 26 would certainly have said: "After the 69 'sevens.'"

- 2) If the angel had desired to say that the first segment would include 69 'sevens' he might conceivably have said "9 and 60," but there is no parallel for speaking of 69 as "7 and 62."
- 3) The punctuation that takes the "7 and 62" as two distinct segments instead of running them together fits the accents contained in the Hebrew Bible. This fact might not, by itself, be sufficient to prove the case, since there is no evidence that accent marks were included in Hebrew manuscripts written during the early centuries of the Christian era. Yet they, like the vowel points, may well represent a tradition passed on with remarkable accuracy for many centuries. In any case the two considerations mentioned above should be sufficient to establish the point.

Thus we reject the erroneous punctuation inserted by Theodotion in his translation into Greek, and followed in many later translations, including the KJV and the NIV. As a vital first step toward interpreting this difficult passage we recognize that the account of the first segment of the 70 'sevens' ends with the words "seven 'sevens'", and that the description of the second segment begins with the words: "And (for) sixty-two 'sevens' it will be rebuilt."

### **The First Segment**

At the first reading of the NIV text the extent of the first segment of the 70 weeks seems clear: "From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens.'"

Yet serious questions arise as soon as one notices the marginal readings of the NIV, which call attention to the fact that at certain points it has made a selection among possible

readings. These marginal readings indicate that the original has no article with "anointed one" and that the word translated "decree" could be rendered as "word," thus showing that the Hebrew words used in the statement have a much wider range of possible meaning than the words of the NIV suggest.

In such a situation it is always well to examine the original carefully, to see whether the suggested translation has made the best selection among possible meanings of the words, or whether an alternative rendering deserves consideration.

The word translated "decree" in the NIV and "commandment" in the KJV is the common Hebrew word *dabar*, which both the KJV and the NIV generally render as "word" or "words." (The KJV does so more than 700 times.) Except for a few cases in the book of Esther, *dabar* is rarely used in the Hebrew Bible to represent a king's command. This is usually expressed by *miswa*, which the KJV translates as "commandment" 173 times. The word *dabar* is frequently used to indicate a divine message or a prophetic declaration, as in every one of its four occurrences earlier in this same chapter.

In verse 2, where it refers to a prophetic message that God had given Jeremiah, both the KJV and the NIV translated *dabar* as "word." In verse 12 it refers to the words of condemnation previously spoken by God's prophets; here again both the NIV and the KJV translate it "words." Both of its occurrences in verse 23 probably refer to the message that God told Gabriel to give to Daniel, but here the two translations differ markedly. Near the beginning of the verse the KJV translates it "commandment," but the NIV renders it "answer." Near the end of the verse the KJV translates it "matter," but the NIV renders it "message." After using *dabar* four times in the previous verses to mean a divine message it is hardly likely that the writer would immediately use it instead of the regular word *miswa* to mean a king's command. Yet here in verse 25 many translations choose the less common meaning for the word, thus making it fit with preconceived ideas of the passage.

If it were simply rendered "word" it would leave the question open.

At this point in our investigation we should not make a hasty decision between two possibilities: (1) that *dabar* is used here to represent a command by a human ruler, such as the command given by Cyrus permitting the Jews to return and rebuild Jerusalem; (2) that it represents a divine message or a prophetic declaration.

The second point in verse 25 where we should recognize that an important phrase can properly be interpreted in more than one way concerns the words that the KJV renders as "Messiah the prince" and the NIV translates "the Anointed One, the ruler." Although the English word "Messiah" does not occur in the KJV Old Testament except in this prophecy (vv. 25 and 26), the Hebrew word that it transliterates occurs 39 times in the Old Testament. In the other 37 occurrences both the NIV and the KJV translate it "anointed one," or "an anointed one." In some of these passages special research would be necessary to decide to whom the word refers but in 18 of them it obviously designates a king. Thus it is applied to Saul in 1 Samuel 12:3, 5; 24:6 (twice), 10; 26:9, 11, 16, 23 and in 2 Samuel 1:14, and 16. There are only four places where it obviously designates a priest: Leviticus 4:3, 5, 16, and 6:15 (v. 22 in English versions).

Although the word "Messiah" eventually came to be used specifically for the promised future leader of God's people there are very few occurrences in the Old Testament where it has even been suggested that such a usage is involved. It cannot, therefore, be taken for granted that each of the two occurrences in Daniel 9:24-27 involves a prediction of Christ. This is a possible interpretation, but other possibilities also deserve consideration.

In the Old Testament the commonest use of *masiah* is in reference to a king, and all such usages except one refer to Israelite kings. That one is of special interest. More than a century in advance Isaiah predicted the coming of a Persian king who would cause Jerusalem to be rebuilt. Isaiah even gave that king's name twice as Cyrus (in Isa. 44:28 and 45:1) and quoted God as calling him "my anointed" (Isa. 45:1).

We must therefore recognize the possibility that in verse 25 the word "anointed" points to Cyrus, the one who would fulfill God's prediction that Jerusalem would be rebuilt.

Thus in this passage there are two possibilities for the meaning of the phrase "an anointed one, a ruler": (1) that it points to Cyrus, who was called God's anointed and predicted by name as the one who would rebuild God's city; (2) that it points directly to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In view of the two possible meanings of each of these two words we can recognize two possibilities for the termini of the first segment:

- 1) That it begins at the issuing of a divine prediction that the city would be rebuilt (Jer. 31:38; 32:15, 37, 44) and runs to the coming of Cyrus, the one who would cause this prophecy to be fulfilled. It is interesting to note that this was approximately 49 years, or seven 'sevens' of years (587-538 B.C.), and that the exact fulfillment of this first segment would give Daniel renewed confidence that the other two segments would occur as predicted.
- 2) That the segment begins at the decree of Cyrus that Jerusalem be rebuilt and runs to the coming of the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. This is the view of Keil and Leupold who take "seven weeks" in the sense of an undesignated period of time. (See discussion below.)

Decision between these possibilities should not be made until the passage has been examined further to see how its parts can be fit together.

### **The Second Segment**

Unlike the account of the first segment, which would begin when a word (or commandment) was issued, and would run to "an anointed one, a ruler," the description of the second segment did not say when it would start or when it would end. It simply described a condition that would exist during a period of sixty-two sevens: that during

this time there would be a rebuilt city "with streets and a trench,<sup>1</sup> but in times of trouble." Montgomery suggests that the words "street" and "moat" (NIV "trench") are used here to show the interior complex and surrounding moat of the city and thus to "present a graphic picture of the complete restoration."<sup>2</sup>

### **Verse 26 -- An Anointed One Cut Off**

According to those who hold that the book was not written until the time of the Maccabees this statement refers to the killing of the innocent high priest Onias in 171 B.C. Most other interpreters agree that the "cutting off" of an anointed one, said to occur "after the sixty-two 'sevens'" relates in some way to the Lord Jesus Christ. The verb *yikkaret* (translated "will be cut off") is used a number of times for death, but can also have a more general meaning.

The beginning of the verse includes a phrase that differs strikingly in the NIV from its translation in the KJV. The KJV says: "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off but not for himself." The NIV says: "After the sixty two 'sevens' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing."

Most present interpreters recognize that the KJV reading "but not for himself" is not a literal translation of the Hebrew words but a paraphrase which aptly describes the atonement of Christ. He did not die for any guilt of His own; He laid down His life as a sacrifice to bear the sins of those who would believe on His Name. The translation in the NIV "and will have nothing," is more literal but its import is far from clear. It does not say what it is of which he "will have nothing" nor does it show whether His having nothing is a situation that precedes or coincides with His being cut off, or whether it is a result of His being cut off. All of these are possible interpretations of the phrase.

The KJV reading is a paraphrase. Is it an acceptable paraphrase? Or must the words be taken as meaning that the Anointed One will lose all that He previously possessed, whether it be goods, authority or people?



It should be noted that the Hebrew particle *w<sup>e</sup>*, which is ordinarily translated by "and," can properly be rendered as "but" and is often so translated (as, for instance, shortly after the beginning of verse 7 of this same chapter). As the text does not specify what it is of which He will have nothing when He is cut off it would be quite in order to assume that what is involved is iniquity or guilt. To be "cut off but have no guilt" would be rather similar in meaning to the KJV paraphrase "cut off but not for himself." In fact Theodotion's Greek translation inserted the word *krima*, "judgment." Montgomery favors the meaning "there is nothing against him." ^3

In view of the definite reference in verse 24 to the atonement as one of the purposes of the 70 weeks this may well be a reference to that important event. Yet it cannot, like "atone for wickedness" in verse 24, be taken as a proper starting point for determining the meaning of the prophecy. Other possible ways of taking it must also be kept in mind while deciding on the meaning of the prophecy as a whole.

Interpretation of the remainder of verse 26 will depend on how its first part is understood. If its first sentence is taken as a prediction of the death of Christ the rest of the verse can very properly be considered to predict events that would occur in the next 40 years. The phrase "the people of the ruler who will come" could well describe the Roman army led by Vespasian and his son Titus which conquered Judea and destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and would be particularly appropriate since both Vespasian and Titus later became Roman emperors.

If instead we should follow Keil in taking the first part of the verse as referring to an event that in our day is still future, then the rest of the verse would naturally also be considered as still future.

### **Summary of Possibilities**

We have noticed several places at which various interpretations are possible. We have seen that the first segment

of seven weeks might. refer to a period of 49 years that began when God gave Jeremiah the divine promise that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, and ended at the coming of the anointed ruler Cyrus who fulfilled that prediction, or that it might reach from the time when Cyrus gave that decree to the coming of Christ, which would require taking the weeks as indefinite periods of time. We have seen the variety of possible interpretations of the phrase "and (but) will have nothing."

Having noticed these points at which various interpretations have been proposed, our next step should be to seek a way to combine selections from these alternatives into a satisfactory interpretation of the passage as a whole. At this point we shall not examine interpretations that divide the prophecy into two periods instead of three and are therefore clearly wrong, or interpretations that begin the 70 weeks with an edict other than that of Cyrus. Such interpretations will be examined in special notes, on pp. 193ff.

### **The View of Keil and Leupold**

One of the best efforts that has been made to fit the different parts of the prophecy of the 70 weeks into a coherent picture is the view presented by Kliefoth<sup>4</sup> and Keil<sup>5</sup> and more recently by Leupold.<sup>6</sup> According to this view the 70 weeks constitute three periods of indefinite length. It holds that the first period (7 weeks) reaches from Cyrus to Christ (actually about five and one-half centuries), that the second period (62 weeks) reaches from Christ to the rise of Antichrist, and that the third period (one week) covers the activities of Antichrist, just before the Lord's return. This view has three strong points in its favor: (1) It recognizes that the passage predicts three periods, not two, thus avoiding the unfortunate twisting of the passage that has been so common in Christian circles; (2) It parallels the predictions of other parts of Daniel by considering the passage as reaching to the very end of the reign of sin; (3) It recognizes the decree of Cyrus as the starting point, as

indeed it should be if *dabar* is taken here as referring to a human command.<sup>7</sup>

Yet this synthesis has three serious defects:

- 1) Perhaps the strongest objection to the theory is the way it has to interpret the beginning of verse 26: "After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing." Those who present the theory say that this means that when Antichrist assumes power at the beginning of the final 'seven' Christ will lose all power on earth; He will be cut off and have nothing at all.<sup>8</sup> This interpretation seems to ascribe to Antichrist a power that would even exceed the power of Satan, who can do nothing except as God permits it.
- 2) It is hard to see how the statement that in the second segment there will be a rebuilt city can describe the period between the death of Christ and the coming of Antichrist. The rebuilding of Jerusalem began soon after Cyrus gave his decree and the rebuilt city lasted until its destruction about forty years after the death of Christ. This theory requires that these terms in the description of the second segment be understood as not applying to the physical city involved in Cyrus' decree, but to a spiritual city, the Christian church. This would necessitate a very illogical change of subject in the middle of the prediction and therefore raises serious questions about the whole synthesis.
- 3) The theory takes the numbers "seven," "sixty-two," and "one" as merely indicating general periods of time. Such an interpretation cannot be rejected as impossible, but should not be adopted until a reasonable effort has been made to find a more definite meaning for the figures.

In view of these difficulties we must see whether a better synthesis can be found, but first we should note another point, generally overlooked, where two interpretations are equally possible.

### **The Possibility of Intervals**

Unspecified intervals frequently occur in the prophecies of Daniel (cf. pp. 47-49). While the years in each segment of the 70 weeks are, of course, to be thought of as following one another without a break, the possibility that there are unspecified intervals between the segments cannot be ruled out. Although this may seem strange to some readers, an illustration will readily show that it is a possibility. Let us suppose that a professor in a great New England university was strongly identified with the Democratic party and was frequently invited by Democratic presidents to hold important government positions. Such a man might say: "I lived in Washington sixteen years. I was on Truman's staff four years (1949-53). I was Attorney General eight years (1961-69) and I was Secretary of State four years (1977-81)." There would be unmentioned intervals between the segments, but no one familiar with American political history would have any difficulty in understanding the situation.

### **The Solution**

In view of the difficulties mentioned above we find it necessary to reject Keil's theory in spite of its many good points. Yet its strong points can be retained and its weaknesses avoided by acceptance of a few simple alternatives at points where two interpretations are equally possible: (1) taking *dabar* in its usual sense of "word" rather than in its less common sense of "command"; (2) recognizing that the term "anointed one" (which refers to Christ in v. 26) need not refer to the same individual in both occurrences, especially since there is strong evidence for considering that in verse 25 it refers to Cyrus, to whom Isaiah had already so definitely applied it; (3) recognizing that there is no ground for insisting that the three segments must follow one another immediately without intervals between.

Thus the first segment would reach from the issuance of

the prophetic word to Jeremiah that Jerusalem would be rebuilt (587 B.C.) to the decree of Cyrus that made this rebuilding possible (538 B.C.). Taking the 70 weeks as weeks of years, we find that the first segment had been exactly fulfilled when Daniel wrote. This parallels the practice found elsewhere in Daniel's prophecies of beginning a prophetic picture with something that has already occurred and thus giving those who received it added reason for expecting the other parts of the prophecy also to occur (cf. p. 85-7).

The second segment would be a period not designated as to precise beginning or ending but filling a great part of the time between the decree of Cyrus and the coming of Christ. This would lead to a second unmentioned interval during which the destruction of Jerusalem would occur, as described in verse 26, and reaching to the still future events of the third segment.

This interpretation exactly fits the words of the passage. It takes every phrase in a way that is in line with the usage of the Hebrew words and gives a satisfactory understanding of the course of events in the prophecy of the 70 weeks.

### **The Final Segment**

Both according to Keil's theory and according to this solution, the third segment describes events that have not yet taken place. No one can know how long the present interval will last.

Full interpretation of the statements about the third segment is outside the province of the present book. God usually reveals future events only in general or sketchy form, clearly enough for their occurrence to give evidence that God's Word is true but not fully enough to give advance knowledge of all the details. Full interpretation of statements about events that are still future, going beyond what can be gained from a simple reading of the passage, would require careful examination of all relevant passages in other portions of the Bible. Before the present writer would wish to attempt such a study he would think it

necessary to make a careful examination, without presuppositions, of all related passages in the Bible.

Suggested interpretations that would consider this segment as having already occurred will be considered in a special note, beginning on p. 204. Other special notes will discuss a number of important matters, not directly affecting our understanding of the main thread of the prophecy of the 70 weeks, but important enough to warrant detailed examination.

### Notes

- ^1 This is the only place in the Bible where *harus* is used to mean "trench" or "moat." There is no supporting evidence for the KJV rendering "wall," which was based on Theodotion and the Vulgate. A parallel, with the meaning "conduit," has recently been found in the Copper Scroll from Qumran.
- ^2 Montgomery, p. 380.
- ^3 Ibid., p. 381.
- ^4 T. Kliefoth, *Das Buch Daniel*, 1868.
- ^5 C. F. Keil, *Kommentar uber den Propheten Daniel*, 1869; Eng. trans. 1877 (Eerdmans reprint, Grand Rapids, 1973). In the preface to his own commentary E. J. Young says of Keil's work: "This, I believe, is by far the best commentary on Daniel."
- ^6 H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, 1949).
- ^7 For discussion of other suggested starting points see p. 193ff.
- ^8 See discussion in Keil, pp. 359-362 and especially in Leupold p. 427f.



## **Special Note on Jeremiah's Prediction of the 70 Years**

The occasion for the events in chapter 9 was Daniel's understanding "from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years" (Dan. 9:2).

Since this precise wording is not found in the book of Jeremiah, Daniel's statement must be understood as a general reference to what Jeremiah had said. There are two places where Jeremiah made a prediction relating to a period of seventy years. The first of these is Jeremiah 25:11-12 which reads as follows:

"This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the LORD, "and will make it desolate forever."

This prediction, given in 605-4 B.C., contains a number of elements: (1) the whole land of Israel will become a desolate wasteland; (2) "these nations" will (continue to) serve the king of Babylon seventy years; (3) after seventy years God will punish the king of Babylon and his nation for their iniquity; (4) God will make Babylon an everlasting desolation.

Although the phrase "seventy years" is used only with the



second and third predictions, we shall look at all four in order.

It is impossible to set a point at which the process of making the whole country a desolate wasteland may be said to have begun. The entire northern kingdom was carried off into exile in 723-722 B.C., making a large portion of the land of Israel desolate. In the time of Isaiah Sennacherib devastated much of the southern kingdom and there were later incursions by other Assyrian emperors from time to time. In 604 Nebuchadnezzar took some hostages, including Daniel himself, to Babylonia. In 597 he captured Jerusalem and took a king of Judah and many of the most skillful Israelites into exile. In 586 Nebuchadnezzar finished a long siege of Jerusalem and carried away most of the remaining people as captives. From that date the land could be said to have become a desolate wasteland, though a large part of the desolation began much earlier. Thus the first part of Jeremiah's statement, that the whole country would become a desolate wasteland, was not entirely fulfilled until about 18 years after the start of the predicted 70-year period.

The second and third parts of the prediction -- that the nations would continue to serve the king of Babylon 70 years, and that after the 70 years God would punish the king of Babylon and his nation -- were fulfilled when Babylon was conquered by Cyrus, king of Persia, about 66 years after Jeremiah received the message. Thus in both these predictions the 70 years is clearly a round number. The fourth prediction was that Babylon would become desolate forever. No modern visitor to the ruins of Babylon can fail to see how precisely this prediction has been fulfilled. A casual reading of Jeremiah's prophecy might lead one to think that this fulfillment was to occur at the end of the 70 years, but this is not so stated in the prediction. Actually the desolation of Babylon did not begin until more than two centuries later. After Cyrus brought the power of the Babylonian kings to an end he made Babylon one of the Persian capitals, and when the Greeks conquered the Persian empire, two centuries later, they made it one of their own capitals. The desolation of the city did not actually

begin until the Hellenistic period had lasted half a century. Then many of its inhabitants were removed to the new city of Seleucia, quite a distance to the north, and Babylon began gradually to sink into its present condition. If a student were not familiar with the fact that divine prophecy often contains unmentioned intervals he might think that Jeremiah had predicted that the desolation of Babylon would begin immediately after the end of the 70 year period.

Jeremiah's other reference to a period of 70 years is in a letter that he sent from Jerusalem to the exiles who had been carried off to Babylon in 597 B.C. Jeremiah 29:10 reads:

This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place."

The previous mention of a 70-year period referred to the end of the Babylonian power over the nations. This one refers specifically to the Jewish captives, promising them that after the 70 year period they would be permitted to return to Jerusalem. Within a year or two after Daniel uttered his prayer this prediction was fulfilled -- about 60 years after this second prediction was given. Again we see 70 years used as a round number.



## **Special Note on the Purposes of the 70 Weeks**

The seven purposes mentioned by the angel Gabriel as objectives of the predicted seventy weeks (or 'sevens') have been the subject of more heated arguments than almost any other individual verse of Scripture, even though no one of them is the starting-point or principal support of any biblical or theological belief. The fact that there are textual questions about the first two of these purposes may account for some of the argument, but this is far from enough to explain it fully. The main difference would seem to be that many interpreters think that the third segment of the seventy weeks involves prediction of events related to the time of Antichrist, while others insist that every part of the prophecy was fulfilled by the events connected with the first advent of Christ.

The present writer finds it hard to understand why there should be so much heat about this matter. All the writers involved in this particular discussion thoroughly believe in the great importance of the substitutionary death of Christ, and most of them (probably all) believe that the Bible predicts the rise of a great and powerful enemy of God near the time of the second advent of Christ. I have never heard that an important theory about any of those events originated from the study of this prophecy or was principally based upon it, but in view of the amount of discussion that it has occasioned I see a special need to examine the facts and the arguments carefully and impartially, reaching solid conclusions wherever the evidence warrants it, but reserving

judgment wherever the evidence is insufficient to provide certainty.

In the NIV the verse reads as follows:

Daniel 9:24 -- Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish<sup>a</sup> transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> The NIV margin reads: Or restrain.

<sup>b</sup> The Hebrew original has no article with this phrase. The NIV margin reads: "*Or Most Holy Place or most holy One.*"

Here six purposes are mentioned, each consisting of a verb and a noun or noun phrase. The nouns in the first three statements are synonyms rendered "transgression," "sin," (KJV "sins") and "wickedness" (KJV "iniquity"). The fourth purpose is "to bring in everlasting righteousness," following up the emphasis of the first three on removing sin. The sixth continues the positive note of the fourth with the words "to anoint a most holy," (literally "a holy of holies"). The remaining statement of purpose, "to seal up vision and prophecy," seems to be in a somewhat different category.

Each of the first two statements has a *qere* and a *kethibh*.<sup>1</sup> In each case some interpreters strongly defend the *qere* and others equally strongly support the *kethibh*. The last two statements of purpose are understood in widely differing ways by various scholars. The only one of the six where neither semantic nor textual grounds provide a basis for a difference of opinion is the third, which, as we have seen, clearly points to atoning for sin and uses the terminology so often found in the sacrificial ritual.<sup>2</sup> It predicts the most important event in all history, and shows that the atonement of Christ must have a vital place in the purposes of the 70 weeks. This gives us warrant for believing that either the reference to the coming of "an anointed one, a ruler" in

verse 25 or the reference to an anointed one being cut off in verse 26, or both, point to the first coming of Christ. It looks back to the beginning of Scripture, since the protevangelium, Genesis 3:15, declared that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. This bruising was accomplished at Calvary, where the sin question was settled. On the basis of the substitutionary atonement of Christ God redeems His people. The guilt of sin has been expiated. Sin may be said to have been removed and everlasting righteousness introduced.

Yet Paul uses the same figure in another way in Romans 16:20, where he says: "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." Although the guilt of all who trust in Christ has been completely removed by His sacrifice at Calvary, sin continues to be very powerful in much of the world and there is a sense in which the full results of Jesus' victory on the cross have not yet been realized. Sin has been completely destroyed in principle but the full outworking of what Christ accomplished at Calvary requires the complete destruction of sin's earthly power, and thus parallels the later events described in Daniel 2, 7, and 11-12.

In the NIV the first statement of purpose reads, "to finish transgression," with a footnote, "Or restrain." Commentators divide almost equally between these two translations, some being very insistent on one or the other. Yet examination of the usage of the two Hebrew verbs shows that the difference has little significance. Those who, following the *qere*, take it as "to finish," derive it from the piel of the verb *kala*, which is used for making something complete, either by filling it or by emptying it. It indicates the reaching of a time when there is no sin or a time where the total amount of sin has occurred and no more can be expected.

Those who prefer to translate the verb as "restrain" take it from the verb *kala*. Examination of the use of this word shows that it means the forcible cessation of an activity. It always points to a complete stop, never to a mere hindrance. It is used in Numbers 11:28, where Joshua urges Moses to make the elders stop prophesying in the camp. Here the KJV translates it "forbid them" and the NIV renders

it more literally as "stop them." Both the KJV and the NIV render it by "restrain" in Exodus 36:6 where the context shows clearly that it indicates a full stop, not a mere hindrance.<sup>3</sup> Thus it actually makes no difference in the meaning of the first statement whether the verb be taken from *kala*, following the *qere*, or from *kala* following the *kethibh*. In either case it indicates a complete end.

It is hard to see how sin could be said to be either completed or stopped before the occurrence of the great events described at the end of chapters 2, 7 and 11-12. Christ gave His life to redeem sinners, not only from the guilt of sins committed before He did so, but also of those that would be committed in later times. This is particularly true when we note that the noun used here is "transgression" (*pesa*) a strong word, often used for rebellion. There are writers who desire to restrict it to the rebellious actions of Jews prior to the crucifixion, but such a restriction seems quite unwarranted. There have been many transgressions and rebellions during the centuries that have elapsed since the first coming of Christ.

### **The Second Purpose**

There is a similar difference of *qere* and *kethibh* in the second purpose, but here the number of interpreters that follow the *kethibh* is much smaller than in the case of the first purpose. Where the *kethibh* has a *beth* the *qere* has a *he*. Many manuscripts have the *he* in the text instead of in a *qere*, and this is supported by most of the early versions. If the *qere* is considered to represent the original it is easy to make sense of the statement. Yet a number of interpreters strongly support the *kethibh* though differing greatly as to its interpretation. It should be noted that here the NIV follows the *qere*, and does not even insert a footnote to mention the *kethibh* as a viable alternative.

If the *qere* is followed the verb is derived from *tamam*, and the phrase means "to put an end to sin," thus giving a sense very close to that of the first purpose, as expressed both in its *qere* and in its *kethibh*.

Those preferring the *kethibh* take the verb from *hatam* "to seal." This Hebrew verb, like English "seal," has more than one meaning.

In ancient times every person of importance had his own seal which he affixed to documents to authenticate them and this meaning still occurs in legal documents.

A second meaning developed very early. Since the seal generally was placed at the end of a document and might be used to close it up so that it would not be seen by anyone who was not authorized to break the seal, the verb developed the meaning of closing something, and this usage still occurs in modern speech.

It is obvious that the first meaning of "seal" could have no relevance here. God would not decree 70 weeks in order to "authenticate sin." If the *kethibh* is followed the second meaning of "seal" must be taken, and a number of interpreters do so, but there is no unanimity among them as to what the phrase would indicate. The commonest interpretation of those who follow the *kethibh* is that it means to place sins under seal so as to reserve them for judgment. Thus Leupold says: "In our passage this is to be done with the sin of the wicked: it is to be securely kept, locked up as it were, and not permitted to roam about at random and do its nefarious work.^4 At least two commentaries^5 refer to Revelation 20:3 in this connection. If sin were to be personalized, (taking the abstract as a representative for the concrete, i.e., the devil) it might be taken as a reference to the event predicted in that verse.

Some commentators assert that all six purposes are to be fulfilled by the end of the first century A.D. It is hard to see how this could be true of these first two statements. If "seal" were to be taken for the translation of the second it would be strange to think of it as referring only to the sins that had been committed up to that time, or to restrict it to sins committed by Israelites.

All in all it seems best to assume that there has been a simple copyist's error perpetuated in the manuscripts that carry the *kethibh*, and that this purpose, like the first, looks



forward to the great final victory over sin predicted in chapters 2, 7 and 11-12.

The third purpose was discussed on p. 160.

### **The Fourth Purpose**

The fourth purpose is "to bring in everlasting righteousness." If it had said "universal righteousness" it would clearly point to the time when all wickedness will be removed and the reign of Christ made universal, after the destruction of the evil powers so vividly described elsewhere in Daniel's prophecies. As the phrase stands, there are two possible interpretations. It may point to the time when righteousness will cover the earth, never again to be overcome by wickedness, or it may be taken as pointing to the fact that for God's people the guilt of the sins for which Christ shed His blood is forever replaced by His everlasting righteousness, and thus as paralleling the third purpose.

### **The Fifth Purpose**

The fifth purpose reads: "to seal up vision and prophecy." In our consideration of the second purpose we noticed that the word "seal" has two meanings: to authenticate or certify, and to close up for privacy or safe-keeping. The translation "to seal up" seems to fit the second meaning rather than the first, while the word "seal" by itself could represent either meaning. Since there is nothing in the Hebrew to suggest that the word "up" should be inserted, it would be better to leave the reader free to decide between the two possible meanings.

Actually the first meaning, to authenticate or certify, makes excellent sense, for the Hebrew word *hatam* and its Greek equivalent *sphragizo* are often used in the Bible to express this meaning. In John 6:27 Jesus says of the Son of Man: "On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval" (more literally in KJV, "him hath God the Father sealed.") Thus in that context the NIV gave a clear rendering

of the first meaning of the word. It would be equally reasonable to translate this fifth purpose as "to set a seal of approval on vision and prophecy."

While the NIV is not incorrect in freely rendering *nabi* as "prophecy," an argument could be made for keeping the literal translation, "prophet," since the fulfillment of the prophet's message verified his claim to be a spokesman for God.

Paul makes a similar use of the word "seal" in 1 Corinthians 9:2, "For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord." If one questions whether Paul is really an apostle of the Lord, the Corinthians who came to believe in Christ through his message are his seal. This is an exact parallel to Gabriel's fifth statement of purpose. It is most naturally interpreted as meaning that the claims of the prophets to be messengers from God will be authenticated by the fulfillment of their visions and predictions.

In spite of these facts a number of writers insist that here "seal" should be taken in the second sense -- that of closing something up. Some base this on the claim that the word must have this sense in the second purpose and therefore could hardly be used in a different sense later in the same verse. This argument would be questionable in any case, but is doubly so because of the unlikelihood that the word is actually used in the second statement.

Those who say that in this purpose "seal" should be taken in the second sense disagree as to what it really signifies. Thus Keil says:

Prophecies and prophets are sealed, when by the full realization of all prophecies prophecy ceases, no prophets any more appear. The extinction of prophecy in consequence of its fulfillment is not, however (with Hengstenberg), to be sought in the time of the manifestation of Christ in the flesh; for then only the prophecy of the Old Covenant reached its end ... and its place is occupied by the prophecy of the N.T., the fulfilling of which is still in the future, and which will not come to an end and terminate ... till the

kingdom of God is perfected in glory at the termination of the present course of the world's history, at the same time with the full conclusive fulfilment of the O. T. prophecy; cf. Acts 3:21.<sup>6</sup>

Hengstenberg, with whom Keil here expressed disagreement, had written:

Commentators are for the most part agreed in the opinion that *sealing up* is equivalent to *fulfilling*, or *confirming*, and that allusion is made to the custom of affixing a seal for the purpose of adding the validity to the contents of a document. ... The expression "to seal" is certainly used in this sense ... in the New Testament, e.g. John 6:27 and other passages ... But it is never so employed in the Old Testament .... The sealing of the sins is accompanied by the sealing of the prophecies; and the latter is described in the prophecies themselves as an act to be performed in the future. When once the fulfilment has taken place, although in other respects the prophecy still retains its great importance, yet in this respect it has answered its purpose, that the eyes of believers in need of strength and consolation are no longer directed to its announcements of a coming salvation, but to a salvation that has already appeared ... There can be no doubt, therefore, that we have here an allusion to the forgiveness of sins to be imparted in the days of the Messiah. And when this, the essential element in the work of Christ had been accomplished, the prophecies, in this respect at least, could justly be regarded as abolished.

The view that Hengstenberg presents with various qualifications, that the fifth purpose did not go further than the first century, because then "the prophecies, in this respect at least, could justly be regarded as abolished," is expressed more positively by E. J. Young, who says:

Many take this action to refer to the impression of a seal upon a writing so as to accredit it. Thus to seal up vision, etc., is said to mean that the prophecies are accredited ... This use of *to seal*, however, does not appear to be supported from the OT. The reference is not to accrediting the prophecy, but to sealing it up so that it will no longer appear. Its functions are finished, and it is not henceforth needed

Keil thinks that this extinction of prophecy is not to be sought in the period of Christ's first advent, since that concluded only OT prophecy. NT prophecy and its fulfillment are yet to be sealed up. Hence, Keil believes that this prophecy is to be fulfilled in the future.

However, the particular description herein chosen very clearly refers to the OT period. Vision was a technical name for revelation given to the OT prophets . . . The *prophet* was the one through whom this vision was revealed to the people. The two words, vision and prophet, therefore, serve to designate the prophetic revelation of the OT period .... When Christ came, there was no further need of prophetic revelation in the OT sense.^8

It is strange that Young should say that the word "seal" is not used in the Old Testament in the sense of accrediting, for such a meaning seems to be obvious in a number of Old Testament contexts. One of the clearest is Daniel 6:17 where a stone was placed over the mouth of the lion's den, and "the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles." Here we note that it was not the sealing with their rings that closed up the den. The sealing was an authentication of the fact that the authority of the king and also of his nobles stood behind its being closed by a stone.

Perhaps Young means that the word "seal" is not used in the Old Testament to indicate ratification by some method other than by a physical seal. Even if this be true, there can

be no doubt that it is used this way in the New Testament in several places -- a fact that he fails to mention. To the Christian, New Testament teaching should be sufficient to settle the matter.

Equally unsatisfactory is Young's statement that the words "vision and prophet" must refer only to Old Testament prophecy. The Greek equivalents of these Hebrew words occur in the New Testament many times. It is impossible to make a clear break between Old Testament and New Testament prophecy. Visions were important in Acts 9, 10, 11, 16 and 18. New Testament prophets are mentioned in Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; 14:29, 37; Ephesians 4:11.

The Christian Bible is not simply the New Testament but the entire Bible. The Old Testament was not meant to be used only until the first coming of Christ and then to be abolished. It remains a vital part of the Word of God. All evangelical interpreters believe that the book of Daniel, like many other Old Testament books, contains predictions reaching far into the future. Evidence about this consensus regarding Daniel 2 has already been presented<sup>9</sup> and most evangelical interpreters, including Young, find it also true of some of the predictions in chapter 7 and in chapters 11-12.

Although many (but not all) of the predictions of the Old Testament were fulfilled in connection with the first advent of Christ, Hengstenberg points out that even these continue to bring blessing to Christians in later centuries. There is no Scriptural warrant for saying that the functions of the Old Testament vision and prophecy came to an end at the time of Christ's first advent or that these terms do not also include the visions and prophecies of the New Testament.

Yet a small but very insistent group of students of the book of Daniel declares that the prophecy of the 70 weeks must end with the first advent of Christ. Young quotes with approval the words of Philip Mauro: "When our Lord ascended into heaven and the Holy Spirit descended, there remained not one of the six items of Daniel 9:24 that was not fully accomplished."<sup>10</sup>

Here, as at a few other places in his generally excellent

commentary, Young allows his presuppositions to dictate his conclusions. Why should it be assumed without proof that the six purposes run only to Christ's first coming? Why is this small group of writers so insistent that nothing in the six purposes can include divine actions later than the first advent of Christ? Can it be due to an unwillingness to admit even the possibility that verse 27 might refer to Antichrist? Such a strong feeling on this matter might seem illogical, since most evangelical interpreters, including writers who take this position on Daniel 9, recognize that Daniel 7 and 11 specifically predict an antichrist who is to appear near the end of the present age!

In this connection it is appropriate to note Young's criticism of Keil's interpretation of the course of the 70 weeks. Speaking of "the view of Keil and Kliefoth that the 7 sevens extended from Cyrus to Christ" he says:

There is nothing inherently objectionable in this except that vs. 25b is then made to extend from the 1st advent of Christ to the consummation, and this is contrary to the Messianic character of vs. 24.<sup>11</sup>

Young says that Keil's view cannot be taken because it looks beyond the first century A. D. and that it cannot do that because the passage is Messianic. When did the term Messiah come to refer only to Christ's first coming? Is not His second coming equally Messianic? Is not His relation to believers in the world today also a part of His Messianic function? How can we say that a prophecy has to be fulfilled in the first century to be Messianic?

Young gives no explanation of the reason why he thinks that the 70 weeks are in their entirety Messianic and therefore must be related only to the first coming of Christ. He simply assumes this without evidence and then lays it down as a reason.

As far as I can determine, the only scholarly source of support that he mentions as warrant for restricting the purpose of the 70 weeks to the time of the first coming of

Christ is Hengstenberg's statement quoted above, and Young omits Hengstenberg's qualifications, which, if carefully examined, show that Hengstenberg does not actually thus restrict the purposes of the 70 weeks.

In summary, our examination of the first five statements has found that the third clearly points to the atonement of Christ, that the first and second look forward to the complete end of sin's power in the world, and that the fourth and fifth probably also include reference to events reaching far beyond the first century of the Christian era.

### **The Sixth Purpose**

The last of the six purposes reads "to anoint a most holy." (There is no definite article here in the Hebrew original.) The Hebrew verb *masab*, from which the word Messiah is derived, means to pour oil on something or someone. Thus a pillar is anointed in Genesis 31:13; the tabernacle in Exodus 30:26, 40:9 and Leviticus 8:10; the altar and its accessories in Exodus 40:10f. and Leviticus 8:11; some shields in Isaiah 21:5.

The word is frequently used for setting a person apart for a special task, either by literally pouring oil on him or as a figurative expression for such an appointment. In Exodus 40:13 Aaron is anointed and in 40:15 his sons are anointed. In 1 Kings 19:15-17 God directed Elijah to anoint two men to be kings and another to be a prophet. In two of these cases there is no evidence that an actual anointing was performed.

The noun phrase "most holy," (literally "holy of holies") is often used with an article to describe the most sacred part of the tabernacle or of the temple. Without the article it is applied to sacrifices, parts of buildings, land areas, and perhaps in one or two places to persons.

The interpretation of this purpose that comes most naturally to mind is that it predicts the consecration of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet many interpreters question this interpretation and point out that among the 38 places where the phrase is used there are only two where it could

possibly refer to a person.

Leviticus 27:28 says that anything "that a man owns and devotes to the Lord -- whether man or animal or family land," if it is so devoted "is most holy to the Lord."

The other instance in which the phrase may perhaps refer to a person is 1 Chronicles 23:13, a verse that is much disputed. In the NIV it reads: "The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart, he and his descendants for ever, to consecrate the most holy things, to offer sacrifices before the LORD, to minister before him and to pronounce blessings in his name forever." In the KJV it reads: "The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons forever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever." But in the NASB it reads: "The sons of Amram were Aaron and Moses. And Aaron was set apart to sanctify him as most holy, he and his sons forever, to burn incense before the Lord, to minister to Him and to bless in His name forever."

Beginning as early as Hippolytus, many commentators have said that in this purpose the phrase refers to Christ, but Keil objects to this interpretation because it is used here without an article and also because it generally refers to a thing rather than a person. He prefers to "understand it of the establishment of the new holy of holies which was shown to the holy seer on Patmos. . . (Rev. 21:13).<sup>12</sup> Others have suggested that it points to the new temple built after the exile, to the establishment of the Christian church, to a temple that is yet to be built, or to a portion of such a temple. Ezekiel applies the phrase to a parcel of land in Ezekiel 48:17, perhaps also in Ezekiel 45:3.

In view of the great diversity of opinion about the meaning of this purpose it can hardly be taken as a basis for interpretation of the prophecy as a whole.

### **Notes on Purposes**

<sup>^1</sup> See p. 26.

<sup>^2</sup> See p. 160.



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- ^3 Since a noun translated "imprisonment" is derived from this verb, some have erroneously taken it as meaning "to shut in." However, its basic idea is not one of being shut in, but of being stopped from carrying on desired activities.
- ^4 H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, p. 413.
- ^5 C. F. Keil, p. 342; H. J. Rose and J. M. Fuller in F. C. Cook's *Bible Commentary*, p. 356.
- ^6 Keil, p. 344.
- ^7 E. W. Hengstenberg, I, pp. 102-105.
- ^8 E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, p. 200.
- ^9 See pp. 79-80
- ^10 Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*, p. 53 quoted by Young on p. 201.
- ^11 E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, p. 205.
- ^12 Keil, p. 349.

## DID DANIEL PREDICT THE EXACT TIME OF CHRIST'S COMING

If God had chosen to do so He could easily have enabled one of His Old Testament prophets to predict, many centuries ahead of time, the exact time when Christ would come, but such a prediction of the exact time when an event would occur in the distant future would be quite unparalleled in Scripture. Yet many ancient and modern readers of the Old Testament have claimed that such a prediction is contained in the ninth chapter of Daniel.<sup>1</sup>

Such claims face a number of problems. Most of them have started by translating *dabar* in verse 25 as "commandment" or "decree," though the word is used far more frequently to indicate a prophetic message.

If one is to take *dabar* as a human "decree" to restore and rebuild, it would be natural to consider it as referring to the decree that Cyrus proclaimed throughout his empire, allowing the Jews to return to their homeland and calling on them to rebuild the temple of the Lord. Taking Cyrus' decree as a starting point for the first segment of the 70 weeks, it immediately becomes obvious that seven weeks of years is too short to reach from 538 B.C. to the time of Christ, so many interpreters (and most of the versions) have rendered the words of Dan. 9:24-26 in such a way as to make the passage predict two segments (69 weeks and one) instead of three segments (7, 62, and one). However, even a period of 69 weeks (483 years) proves to be more than half a century short of reaching from the decree of Cyrus to the birth of Christ, and this has led those who expect to find a

prediction of an exact time in the distant future to look for another decree that could be taken as a starting-point instead of that issued by Cyrus.

Many have suggested beginning the 69 weeks at the incident described in Nehemiah 2. They speak of this as "a decree to rebuild the city," though, as Keil points out, there is no evidence that Artaxerxes gave a decree at that time.<sup>2</sup> No such word as "decree" or "command" occurs in connection with it. As described in the Scripture it appears to be only an expression of a king's favor toward a servant whom he liked, giving him permission to travel to the city where his ancestors had lived and make some repairs there.

If Artaxerxes had actually issued a decree that the city be rebuilt, there would have been no need for Nehemiah to make a nocturnal examination of the broken walls (Neh. 2:11-16) or to do his rebuilding under constant threat of attack (Neh. 4:11-23). Merely to show the king's officers such a decree would have guaranteed protection while carrying it out. Officials who had assisted Ezra in executing the decree made by Artaxerxes twelve years earlier would certainly have given equal support to Nehemiah if he had been able to show them an actual decree.

In spite of these problems many interpreters insist on taking this alleged decree as a starting point. When they do so they face a different sort of chronological difficulty, since a period of 483 years, starting in 445 B.C., would reach a time several years later than any possible date for the resurrection. Yet some have not only declared that 69 weeks can be taken as reaching to the time of Christ from the date of Artaxerxes' permission to Nehemiah; some have even said that the 69 weeks point to the very day of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem shortly before the crucifixion. They do this by asserting that the 483 years are not to be taken as solar or Julian years, but as "prophetic years."

This idea seems to have originated with Sir Robert Anderson of Scotland Yard in London, England. Anderson's book, *The Coming Prince*, was first published in 1881 and went through numerous editions. A number of other writers

have adopted Anderson's interpretation.<sup>3</sup> It is especially unfortunate that Harold W. Hoehner's excellent book, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, 1977), includes a chapter in which he strongly asserts and vigorously defends Anderson's theory.

There are a number of very weak points in this interpretation. The most serious defect is its assertion that Scriptural predictions should be understood in terms of "prophetic years." This theory is based upon an alleged equivalence of the terms "middle of that 'seven'" (Dan. 9:27), "a time, times and half a time" (three and a half years) in Daniel 7:24-25, 12:7 and Revelation 12:14, "1260 days" in Revelation 11:3 and 12:6, and "42 months" in Revelation 11:2 and 13:5. Hoehner says: "Thus the 42 months equals the 1260 days, and that equals the time, times and half a time, or three and one-half years, which in turn equals the half week in Daniel 9:27. Hence the month is thirty days and the years is 360 days."<sup>4</sup>

Examination of these passages results in serious question as to whether their figures are meant to be precise. Are 42 months and 1260 days meant to be taken as precise figures? It is common among all peoples to use figures in a rather general way. Thirty days is a good general term for a month, and multiples of 30 stand easily for a series of months, even though less than half of our months are actually 30 days in length.

In Biblical language, as in ordinary human speech, general terms occur frequently. If a modern American should say in February that something happened "exactly a month ago" he would mean "31 days ago." If he said the same thing in March he would mean either "28 days ago" or "29 days ago," depending on whether it was a leap year. If he said it in May he would mean "30 days ago."

There is no Biblical statement that God specified the precise time measures that His people should use, but when He made the sun, moon, and stars He said that they should "serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years" (Gen. 1:14). In view of this Scriptural statement it is natural to expect that the Bible would represent periods of time in

terms of natural phenomena rather than on the basis of any artificial system.

There are three natural divisions of time:

- 1) The division between day and night. In most parts of the year the length of the day constantly changes, oscillating within regular limits, but the total of day and night remains practically the same throughout the year.
- 2) The word "month" originally meant the time between the first appearance of the new moon in one cycle and its first appearance in the next (about 29 1/2 days later). In ancient Israel it was customary each month to look for witnesses to the appearance of the new moon during the previous night. If there were dependable witnesses they would proclaim the fact that a new month had begun. This practice was continued until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Thus in most countries the length of the month oscillated between 29 and 30 days. The one important exception was Egypt, where an artificial month of 30 days was established at an early time, having twelve months in the year and adding five extra days at the end of each year so as to make it correspond with the regular round of seasons. This very ancient arrangement was continued in Egypt until the time of Julius Caesar, who established a similar practice at Rome, adding the five extra days to five different months instead of at the end of the year. Caesar introduced leap years to prevent the year from getting out of harmony with the changing seasons.

- 3) The word "year" has always meant a complete round of the seasons. The exact length of this round of the seasons varies from year to year but when the lengths of any considerable number of successive years are averaged the results are identical. Apart from astronomical observations or careful determination of the

exact length of the successive days (as in the American southwest in prehistoric times), it would not be easy to determine the exact number of days in any one round of the seasons, but by averaging the seasons for a number of years a fairly exact determination would easily be made. (It is thought that this was done in prehistoric Egypt by averaging the number of days between the annual floodings of the Nile).

Since a complete round of the seasons takes  $365 \frac{1}{4}$  days, and the moon goes through 12 cycles in 354 days, it would be quite natural to think of 12 months as approximating a year, especially in the hot desert of Arabia where the moon would be a prominent factor in life and there might be little change of seasons. Under such conditions the fact that 12 cycles of the moon is actually 11 days short of a year might easily fail to be realized. A straight lunar calendar, counting 12 lunar months as a year, became established among the followers of Mohammed and is still used by the Muslims. Every year their calendar drops back  $11 \frac{1}{4}$  days. Muslims are forbidden to eat or drink on any day in the month of Ramadan. Each year Ramadan begins 11 days earlier than the year before. It may occur one year in the middle of summer, a few years later in the middle of winter.

It is understandable that under desert conditions a lunar year might seem satisfactory, but under the conditions of the land of Israel such a calendar would never work. For a year or two it might not be noticed that every month was beginning 11 days earlier than in the preceding year, but soon the scheduled dates of such events as the Day of First Fruits and the Feast of Harvest would begin to arrive before the crops were ready. We may be sure that when it seemed likely that this would happen the priests would announce the insertion of an extra month, either in the spring or in the fall. Soon these intercalations were being made at least once every three years. In Babylonia and Greece similar determinations were made by the rulers. Thus the length of the year would oscillate between 354 and 384 days. Eventually a definite system of introducing extra months at

regular intervals was worked out and such a system is still observed in the ecclesiastical practice of the Jews. Years vary in length but over the course of a few years their average length agrees exactly with that of the solar year.

Supporters of Anderson's theory assert that the Babylonians and other ancient peoples worked on the basis of a year similar to their assumed "prophetic year," but there is abundant evidence that this was not the case. It is true that the ancient Egyptian year consisted of 12 months of 30 days each, but five extra days were always added at the end of the year to bring it into line with the solar year.

Hoehner makes the statement: "When one investigates the calendars of ancient India, Persia, Babylonia and Assyria, Egypt, Central and South America, and China it is interesting to notice that they uniformly had twelve thirty day months (a few had eighteen twenty-day months) making a total of 360 days for the year and they had various methods of intercalating days so that the year would come out correctly.  
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The first part of this sentence is highly questionable: "that they uniformly had twelve thirty-day months." In most cases, aside from Egypt, there is little evidence for such a practice.

But the important part of the sentence is its last 16 words: "and they had various methods of intercalating days so that the year would come out correctly." I have been unable to find solid evidence that any nation ever counted years in such a way that each of them was considered to be 360 days in length. In practically every case, as he says, "they had various methods of intercalating days so that the years would come out correctly." The word "year" does not mean an artificial number of days or months but a complete round of the seasons. Even though the length of this round may differ from year to year, one finds over a period of years that its average length is identical with that of the solar year. Except for the Mohammedan year every case that I have investigated has had some method of "intercalating days so that they would come out correctly."

The most serious difficulty with Anderson's theory is that

it assumes without any real proof the existence of a prophetic year to supplant the natural year which God ordained when He said that the sun, moon, and stars should "serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years."

Some additional objections should be noted. Anderson says that 483 years of 360 days each would reach exactly from the day when Artaxerxes is alleged to have given a decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the day of the triumphal entry. Yet all that the book of Nehemiah says about the time when Artaxerxes gave Nehemiah permission to revisit his homeland is that the day when the king asked him why he looked so sad -- a day on which Nehemiah happened to be serving as cupbearer -- was in the month of Nisan. Anderson insists that this must be the first day of Nisan,<sup>6</sup> but there is no evidence of any reason why that would be the particular day on which Nehemiah would be called to render this service. Hoehner says "it could have occurred on some other day in Nisan."<sup>7</sup> This admission wrecks the whole theory. Even on the assumption of the so-called prophetic year, 483 years figured from at least three quarters of the days in the month of Nisan would reach a time well beyond the resurrection of Christ.

Another serious question about Anderson's theory relates to the dates for the beginning and end of the supposed 69 weeks. He takes these to be Nisan 1 in the 20th year of Artaxerxes' reign and Nisan 10 in A.D. 32. He says that these dates correspond to March 14, 445 B.C. and April 6, A.D. 32, and that the number of the days between them works out to exactly 483 years of 360 days. But Hoehner says: "Anderson's calculations include some problems. First, in the light of new evidence since Anderson's day, the 445 B.C. date is not acceptable for Artaxerxes' twentieth year; instead the decree was given in Nisan, 444 B.C. Second, the A.D. 32 date for the crucifixion is untenable. It would mean that Christ was crucified on either a Sunday or Monday. In fact, Anderson realizes the dilemma and he has to do mathematical gymnastics to arrive at a Friday crucifixion. This makes one immediately suspect. Actually there is no good evidence for an A.D. 32 crucifixion date."<sup>8</sup>



For Anderson's first date Hoehner substitutes Nisan 1, 444 B.C., which he says "was March 4, or more likely March 5 since the crescent of the new moon would have been first visible so late at night (ca. 10 p.m.) on March 4 and could easily have been missed." Then he presents calculations intended to demonstrate that the time between March 5, 444 B.C. and March 30, A.D. 33 is exactly 483 "prophetic years" to the very day.

Yet Parker and Dubberstein,<sup>10</sup> an authority to which Hoehner refers, points out that there is evidence of a month being intercalated in 446 B.C., and therefore gives April 13 as the date of Nisan 1 in 445 B.C. and April 3 as its date in 444, thus raising great doubt about the dates given by either writer. In view of this evidence, even 483 "prophetic years" would reach a time several weeks beyond either date suggested for the crucifixion.

A theory somewhat similar to Anderson's was proposed as early as the third century A.D. by Julius Africanus, the first great Christian chronographer. Africanus made no effort to interpret the three segments of the predicted 70 weeks but simply assumed that the entire period should reach from a decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the time of Christ. Taking the 20th year of Artaxerxes as a starting point he decided that 70 weeks (490 years) would reach fifteen years beyond the time of the crucifixion, and therefore suggested that the years should be considered as lunar years. (Actually, "lunar year" is a contradiction in terms. Months, not years, were originally based upon the moon. Except for the present Mohammedan calendar, a year has always been understood to mean a round of the seasons, caused by the earth's changing relation to the sun.) According to Africanus' calculation there were 475 years between the 20th year of Artaxerxes' reign and the year in which the crucifixion of Christ occurred. Since a well-established system of intercalation was followed in Babylonia and also in Israel, it was easy to figure that during these 475 years 180 months would have been intercalated. Dividing this number by 12 he said that the intercalations would equal 15 lunar years and that therefore the 475 solar years should be considered as 490

lunar years, and thus exactly fulfill the prediction of the 70 weeks. Since we know that years were not counted this way in Babylonia or in Israel, his suggested system is quite arbitrary and unfounded. Africanus' view is described in detail by Eusebius<sup>11</sup>, and by Jerome<sup>12</sup>, though neither expresses agreement with it.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Dan. 9:24-26.

<sup>2</sup> Keil, *Commentary on Daniel*. p. 380.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the writers favoring it are: Robert D. Culver, *Daniel and the Latter Days*, (Westwood, NJ 1954), P. 145; Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, (Grand Rapids, 1977), p. 135ff; Geoffrey R. King, *Daniel*, (Grand Rapids, 1966), p. 172, 179; Alva J. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks*, 7th ed. (Grand Rapids, 1940); Philip R. Newell, *Daniel, The Man Greatly Beloved and His Prophecies*, (Chicago, 1962), p. 148; Renald E. Showers, *The Most High God*, W. Collingswood, NJ, 1982), pp. 123 24; W. C. Stevens, *The Book of Daniel*, (Los Angeles, 1943), pp. 157 60; Louis T. Talbot, *The Prophecies of Daniel*, (Los Angeles, 1940), pp. 232-33; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel the Key to Prophetic Revelation*, Chicago, 1971), p. 228.

<sup>4</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, p. 136.

<sup>5</sup> Hoehner, pp. 135-36. Hoehner has been misled by unfounded statements by Anderson and by Velikovsky.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Anderson, *The Coming Prince*, p. 122.

<sup>7</sup> Hoehner, p. 138.

<sup>8</sup> Hoehner, p. 137.

<sup>9</sup> Hoehner, p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.-AD. 75* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1956), pp. 8, 32.

<sup>11</sup> Eusebius, *The proof of the Gospel*, Book viii, ch. 2 (pp. 124-5), trans. by W. J. Ferrar (London and New York, 1920; Baker Book House reprint, 1981) Vol. 2, pp. 124-125.

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^12 Jerome's Commentary on Daniel, trans. by Gleason L. Archer, Jr.  
(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958) pp. 98-103.

## **Special Note on Daniel 9:26-27 and the Abomination of Desolation**

### **Verse 26**

"After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed."

As we have seen, a strong argument can be made for taking the first sentence of this verse as a prediction of the atoning death of Christ,<sup>1</sup> though Keil and Leupold have urged that the entire verse be taken as a description of the beginning of Antichrist's reign.<sup>2</sup> According to the Maccabean view the sentence describes the murder "of the martyred high priest, Onias III" in 170 B.C. (cf. 2 Macc. 4:33f).<sup>3</sup>

If the sentence is taken as referring to the crucifixion, the rest of the verse is readily interpreted as a description of the series of events that occurred about thirty years later when nearly four years of effort to throw off Roman domination ended in the complete destruction of the city and the temple. Multitudes died in the fighting; thousands starved during the long siege; great numbers were sold into slavery. The land of Israel became a scene of frightful desolation and before there was much improvement the great rebellion under Bar Cochba in A.D. 132-135 led to further carnage and even greater desolation. Centuries passed before the land could fully recover.

It has been suggested that the words, "The people of the

ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary" apply particularly well to the fact that the attack was begun under the leadership of Vespasian and completed under his son Titus, since both men later became Roman emperors and each could thus aptly be called "a coming ruler." Perhaps the words "the people of" involve a hint of the fact that, according to Josephus, Roman soldiers burned the temple in spite of Titus' efforts to save it<sup>4</sup>

The wording of the last two-thirds of the verse is peculiarly adapted to describe the terrible catastrophies that befell the Jewish nation in the first century A.D. Yet two other views have gained considerable attention, views that relate the verse to one or other of the two great crises that loom so large in Daniel's prophecies: 1) the attempt of Antiochus IV to destroy the Jewish religion in the second century B.C., and 2) the similar crisis resulting from the activity of Antichrist at the end of the age.

This verse presents a serious problem to the holders of the Maccabean view, who try to relate the entire book to the outlook of a writer at the time of Antiochus IV. According to their view all predictions in the book of Daniel belong to one of two types: 1) predictions made after the fact, i.e., giving as a pretended prediction something that the writer knew to have already occurred; 2) predictions based on the unknown writer's guesses and hopes for the future. Although the first sentence of the verse could easily be construed as an alleged prediction of the killing of Onias, the deposed high priest, its remaining sentences are not easily placed under either of these categories.

Supporters of the Maccabean view hold that these sentences were an alleged prediction of the events listed in 1 Maccabees 1:21-23, 30-33, though the language of the verse goes far beyond any physical damage actually produced by Antiochus. Montgomery says that there was little physical destruction at this time<sup>5</sup> and suggests that the word be understood as "corrupt" rather than "destroy." Yet Scripture uses the same verb, *sahat*, in connection with the destruction of the human race by the flood<sup>6</sup> and in connection with the destruction of Sodom;<sup>7</sup> it is far too strong a word for the

amount of harm done to the city and the sanctuary in the time of Antiochus, which was quickly repaired after the Maccabeans regained control. Nothing short of the indescribable horrors of the destruction under Titus can reasonably be considered as a fulfillment of the events predicted in this verse.

### **The First Part of Verse 27**

This verse divides naturally into two parts. The first appears in the NIV as follows:

"He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering."<sup>8</sup>

The words "for one 'seven'" and "In the middle of the 'seven'" make it obvious that this verse deals with the third segment of the 70 weeks, the one that consists of only one week. Jerome says that two great Christian thinkers, Hippolytus<sup>9</sup> and Africanus,<sup>10</sup> who lived in the first half of the third century, A.D., considered the principal subject of verse 27 to be the rise and destruction of the Antichrist and said that this verse describes events that will occur long after those predicted in verse 26, after an unmentioned interval of undesignated length -- an interpretation similar to that stated above, on pages pp. 171-172, and also, as far as verse 27 is concerned, agreeing with the interpretation advanced by Keil and Leupold. In considering such a view it should, of course, be recognized that the phrase "sacrifice and offering" might stand for worship and religious practice in general, and could thus point to actions similar to the efforts of present-day communist governments to stop all religious activities.

We shall not try to explain the verse in detail, since predictions of events that in our day are still future cannot be fully interpreted without a study of all relevant passages in the Bible, and this would go beyond the purpose of the

present study. However, our purpose includes careful examination of every prediction, in order to determine in each case whether the fulfillment is still future. In such cases we have sought to examine every suggested interpretation that would consider the prediction as one that relates to events that have already occurred. It thus becomes necessary for us to consider two attempts to explain verse 27 as referring to events that are already past.

We shall first examine the interpretation presented by the supporters of the Maccabean view. They lay great stress on the words "put an end to sacrifice and offering," which could well describe what Antiochus did when he ordered that Jewish worship be stopped (cf. Dan. 8:11-13). (This, of course, does not prove that something similar might not also occur in the time of Antichrist).

Supporters of the Maccabean view say that the words that begin the verse, "he will confirm a covenant with many," relate to the event described in 1 Maccabees 1:11-15 where some of the Jews asked Antiochus for permission to introduce gymnastics and other Greek practices into Jerusalem, but this request does not really fit the statement in the verse. 1 Maccabees does not say anything about a covenant, there is no evidence that any time-period was involved, and the initiative did not come from the one who gave the permission but from those who asked for it. It does not mention any action that could properly be called "confirm a covenant" or include any words that could be related to the statement that the covenant was made "for one 'seven.'"

The other attempt to interpret the verse as having already been fulfilled is quite different from the Maccabean view. Starting as early as the fourth century A.D. efforts were made to apply the utmost possible of the prophetic writings to the life and work of Christ. The idea that the first sentence of this verse describes the ministry of Christ was suggested by Eusebius,<sup>11</sup> repeated by various commentators, presented by Hengstenberg<sup>12</sup> and strongly supported by E. J. Young.<sup>13</sup> It holds that the words "confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven'" picture the preaching activities of

Christ, and that "put an end to sacrifice and offering" describe His death at Calvary.

There are a number of serious objections to this view:

- 1) Even if it should be granted that the words, "he will confirm a covenant," might be considered as a prediction of the earthly ministry of Christ, it is hard, on this interpretation, to see any relevance to the phrase, "for one 'seven.'"
- 2) It is highly questionable that Christ's death can be properly described as "put an end to sacrifice and offering." It is true that all the sacrifices and offerings pointed to the death of Christ, but these sacrifices continued to be offered for nearly forty years after that event. In answer to this objection, it is said that they ceased to be valid after that time, but this implies that until that time they had been effective as atonement for sin. The sacrifices never had validity in themselves but simply pointed to the sacrifice of Christ (cf. Heb. 10:1-9).
- 3) A very serious objection involves the words "middle of the week." On the assumption that the earthly ministry of Christ lasted three and a half years a first half of the week might be assumed, but if the second half ran to the destruction by the Romans (which, on this interpretation, would surely be what is described in the remainder of the verse), then the second half of the week would be nearly 40 years in length -- a very lopsided week! Some have suggested that this could be alleviated by assuming that the second half of the week runs to the death of Stephen; others say, to the conversion of Paul. Various theories have been advanced, none of which has any basis in precise knowledge of chronology, or in fitness of idea.
- 4) A less important objection might be based on the rather confused chronology involved in taking the last part of verse 26 as a description of the events from A.D. 66 to



A.D. 70, then going back to the earthly life of Christ, and then repeating the events of A.D. 66-70. In contrast, the view presented above (p. 172) permits direct chronological progress from the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem in verse 26 to the activities of Antichrist in verse 27.

### **The Second Part of Verse 27 and the Abomination of Desolation**

As there has been much diversity in the translations of the latter half of this verse, a few of them will be quoted here. The notes attached to each translation will consist of marginal variants inserted by the translators rather than, as usual in this book, remarks by the writer.

KJV -- "and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

Original NIV -- "And one who causes desolation will place abominations on a wing of the temple<sup>ab</sup> until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

<sup>a</sup> Marks placed before and after the words "of the temple" indicate that these words are an insertion, not contained in the Hebrew.

<sup>b</sup> Or *will come on the wings of abominations*

Copies of the NIV issued since 1984 -- "And on a wing of the temple<sup>a</sup> he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.<sup>hmi</sup>

<sup>a</sup> As in the earlier printings, the words "of the temple" are marked to indicate that there are no corresponding words in the Hebrew original.

<sup>h</sup> Or *it* <sup>i</sup>Or *And one who causes desolation will come upon*

the pinnacle of the abominable temple<sup>a</sup>, until the end that is decreed is poured out upon the desolated city<sup>a</sup> [<sup>a</sup> There are marks around "temple" and "city" to indicate that these words are not in the Hebrew original.]

This second half of verse 27 predicts that catastrophe and desolation will follow the events described in the first half of the verse. Despite much uncertainty about the details of this strange sentence, its general purport is clear. It is either a further description of the destruction that would occur in A. D. 66-70, or it predicts that a catastrophe will follow the deeds of the Antichrist. It might not have been necessary to say more about it here, except for its probable relation to a phrase quoted in the New Testament: "the abomination of desolation."

This phrase is of special interest because of its occurrence in the words of Christ:

Matthew 24:15: "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,'<sup>a</sup> spoken of through the prophet Daniel -- let the reader understand -- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains."

Mark 13:14: "When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation'<sup>a</sup> standing where it does not belong -- let the reader understand -- then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

<sup>a</sup>In the New Testament and in the Septuagint this Greek phrase reads literally "the abomination of desolation." The corresponding Hebrew phrase in Daniel reads literally "abomination (or abominations) that cause(s) desolation." The Hebrew has a "causative" form which it uses in this phrase. Not having such a form, the Greek merely uses a genitive. In this translation the NIV quite properly substitutes the more precise Hebrew of Daniel for the actual Greek used in the gospels -- a permissible procedure since our Lord probably spoke

Aramaic, a language with many similarities to Hebrew.

In these verses Jesus used the phrase with reference to something that would occur at a time that was then still future. There are differing opinions among New Testament students as to whether the phrase pointed to something that would occur during the Roman conquest in A.D. 66-70, or whether it pointed to something that would happen in the time of Antichrist.

In 1 Maccabees 1:54 the phrase, "abomination of desolation," is applied to the act of Antiochus Epiphanes in setting up a statue of Zeus in the defiled temple above the altar. A somewhat similar phrase, "the rebellion (or sin) that causes desolation," occurs in the prediction of this act of Antiochus in Daniel 8:13.

It is quite reasonable to suggest that perhaps Jesus took the act of Antiochus Epiphanes as an illustration of some thing that would be done at a later time, whether by the Romans or by Antichrist. Yet it is not unreasonable to wonder whether He might have had in mind a still unfulfilled prophecy of Daniel in which the phrase was used. The exact phrase occurs in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11.

The context clearly indicates that Daniel 11:31 is a prediction of this act of Antiochus in 167 B.C. According to what we believe to be the correct interpretation of Daniel 12:11<sup>14</sup> it is also used in that passage with reference to this deed of Antiochus. It appears certain that in Daniel 9:27 the time of the predicted action has the same range of possibilities as those of the Lord's prediction in the gospels, and the verse contains the same two words that are elsewhere translated "the abomination that causes desolation." Yet of the many translations into English that I have examined, the revised form of the NIV is the only one that contains this phrase.

In both of the early Greek translations of Daniel 9:27 the two words occur in exactly the same form as in the New Testament references. Many English translations separate the two words in such a way as to break the connection between them. The verse is admittedly a difficult one to translate,

but it is often difficult to see in advance of their fulfillment the precise meaning of prophecies of the distant future. Since the probable time of fulfillment is the same as that involved in Jesus' statement, it impresses me as highly probable that this verse is the one He had in mind in the verses quoted above. Various guesses have been made as to the precise form of the predicted "abomination that causes desolation." In line with the original use in 1 Maccabees, some have suggested that it meant the placing of Roman religious signs or statues in the temple. If the reference is to the time of Antichrist it could point to something of similar nature.

The inserted words "of the temple" are a guess and precise interpretation of this part of the verse is difficult. If the events predicted are still future the exact meaning should become clear at the time of their fulfillment. It is difficult to relate the last part of the verse, "until the end that is decreed is poured out on him," to anything that happened to the Roman conquerors of Jerusalem, unless the NIV marginal reading, "it," is adopted, in which case it could point to the destruction of the temple or of the city.

### Notes

<sup>^1</sup> See pp. 166-168.

<sup>^2</sup> Keil, p. 359-362; Leupold, p. 427-428.

<sup>^3</sup> S. R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel* (Cambridge University Press, 1900), 139; J. A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 381; Arthur Jeffery, "Daniel" in *The Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. VI (New York: Abingdon, 1956), p. 496; Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 142.

<sup>^4</sup> Josephus, *Wars of the Jews* trans. by Wm. Whiston, Book VI, Ch. 4, sec. 6,7 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1960) pp. 580-581.

<sup>^5</sup> Montgomery, p. 383.

<sup>^6</sup> Gen. 6:17; 9:11, 15.

<sup>^7</sup> Gen. 13:10; 19:13, 14.

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^8 In copies of the NIV issued before 1984 this half of the verse is printed as one sentence, and reads: "He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven,' but in the middle of that 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering."

^9 Cf. Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, p.103.

^10 Cf. Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, p.105.

^11 Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospels*, trans. by W. J. Ferrar (London and New York, 1920; Baker Book House reprint, 1981) Vol. 2, pp. 135-137.

^12 E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, Vol. III, (Grand Rapids, 1956), pp. 145-148.

^13 E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel* (Grand Rapids, 1949), p. 217.

^14 See discussion in chapters 17 and 18.

## **The Great Historical Foreview in Chapter 11**

In contrast to the first nine chapters of the book of Daniel, each of which is clearly a separate unit, chapters 10-12 form one continuous passage. If one forgets that these chapter divisions were not put in until the 13th century A.D., it is easy to be misled by the unjustified chapter divisions that break it up.

Daniel 10:1-11:1 forms a long introduction to the divine message that begins at 11:2. This revelation was given in the third year of Cyrus. Like the message in chapter 9, it came after the second of the four empires described in chapters 2 and 7 had already become dominant.

Most of chapter 10 describes the coming of an angelic messenger sent to give Daniel this revelation. The revelation itself begins at 11:2. The mistaken insertion of a chapter division before 11:1 may have been caused by the fact that the verse mentions a specific time, and seems, at a superficial glance, to be similar to the first verse of chapters 1, 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Yet this verse is so tightly connected with what precedes that the New International Version puts a space between 11:1 and 11:2, and thus unites 11:1 with the last verse of chapter 10.

The chapter division between chapters 11 and 12 is also quite out of place. Since chapter 11 already had 45 verses it is easy to see why the archbishop might wish to make a division, but it would be more reasonable to make it four verses later, since 12:1, which begins with the words "at that time," connects the events described in 12:1-3 very closely

with the events described in the previous verses. Although 12:5-13 may be considered as a conclusion to the book as a whole, it is obvious that these verses are presented as part of the same vision that began in chapter 10.

This prophecy, which gives additional detail about some of the situations discussed in previous chapters, is mostly in plain language. It contains no extended symbols and comparatively few figures of speech. Yet many of its statements are expressed in language that is somewhat vague. It rarely mentions countries by name, and many of its statements about the activity of individuals are rather cryptic in nature. After the predicted event had occurred it would be easy to see that the fulfillment exactly corresponded with the prediction, but in many cases it would have been very difficult to tell in advance exactly what was going to happen. This is particularly true since there are few indications of time in the passage.

As stated in 10:1, this message was received by Daniel in the third year of Cyrus, who was the first king of Persia, the second of the four great kingdoms. The message begins at 11:2 and looks forward through a long period of secular history. Verse 2 deals with the relation of Persia to Greece, which would later become the third great kingdom, and verse 3 tells how this Greek empire would be established.

(2) Now then, I tell you the truth: Three more kings will appear in Persia, and then a fourth, who will be far richer than all the others. When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece. (3) Then a mighty king will appear, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases.

Those commentators who take the Maccabean view of the date of Daniel interpret verse 2 as saying that there would be only four more kings of Persia after Cyrus. Such a view assumes that the alleged writer was completely wrong in his idea of Persian history. Even more important, it loses the essential thought of the passage. The point of

verses 2 and 3 is to show that a Persian king would make a great attack against Greece, but that eventually Greeks under Alexander would conquer the Persian empire. The intent of verse 2 is not to say that there will be only four more kings of Persia, but to call attention to the fourth king after Cyrus and to tell something important about him.

Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyses. Then came the brief reign of the usurper called Pseudo-Smerdis. A cousin of Cambyses named Darius asserted a claim to the throne and overcame Pseudo-Smerdis, but immediately rebellions broke out in many parts of the empire. Darius succeeded in putting down these uprisings and then proceeded to perfect the organization of the empire and to establish the basis on which it continued with great strength for nearly two centuries.

The areas that Cyrus had conquered included Asia Minor. The Greek cities in western Asia Minor tried repeatedly to gain their independence, and in this effort they frequently received help from their friends on the Greek mainland in Europe. In order to put a stop to this interference Darius sent a large army and navy to attack Greece, but two great efforts were repulsed.

Darius now decided to make an all-out effort to conquer Greece, and ten years were spent in building up a mighty force to accomplish this purpose. Before the ten years had passed Darius died and was succeeded by his son Xerxes, the fourth king after Cyrus (10:1; 11:2). He inherited far greater riches than any previous king of Persia. The latter part of Daniel 11:2 declares, "When he has gained power by his wealth, he will stir up everyone against the kingdom of Greece."

The great army that Darius and Xerxes had prepared was composed of men from many racial and linguistic groups. It was so large that it is said to have required a whole week to march over the bridge that Xerxes ordered constructed across the Hellespont from Asia into Europe.

The Greeks were very proud of the fact that this tremendous army failed in its effort to conquer Greece. This was by no means a sign of weakness in Persia. The army



was a very long distance away from its home base. The Greeks were desperately fighting for the liberty of their homeland. Some important mistakes in strategy were made by Persian leaders, and weather conditions assisted the Greeks. The great attack against Greece was repulsed, and for nearly two centuries thereafter the Greeks continued to celebrate their deliverance from Persia, and to wish to prostrate the power of Persia, the nation they had come to regard as their great enemy.

Verse 3 tells of the Greek counterattack, a century and a half after the great Persian expedition. It says: "Then a mighty king will appear, who will rule with great power and do as he pleases." These words briefly summarize the vast conquests so vividly described in the picture of the beginning of the third kingdom in Daniel 8:5-7. All interpreters agree that verse 3 refers to Alexander the Great.

The interval of more than a century and a half between verses 2 and 3 is in no way indicated in the prophecy. This fact should make us cautious about taking it for granted that two predicted events immediately follow one another, simply because they are stated in succession.

### **The Breakup of Alexander's Empire**

(4) After he has appeared, his empire will be broken up and parceled out toward the four winds of heaven. It will not go to his descendants, nor will it have the power he exercised, because his empire will be uprooted and given to others. (5) The king of the South will become strong, but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power.

The breakup of Alexander's realm has already been briefly summarized in chapter 8. Alexander had barely completed his conquest of the Persian empire, his march through its eastern areas and his return as far as Babylon, when he died. As the verse points out, during the next forty years his

kingdom was parceled out toward the four points of the compass. It does not say that it was precisely divided into four sections. At one time there were five powerful contenders for the empire. After many years of fighting, a permanent situation was established in which three great dynasties ruled large portions of Alexander's empire, while a number of smaller sections maintained their independence.

The latter part of verse 4 was literally fulfilled. Within fifteen years after Alexander's death every member of his family had been killed. No part of his empire remained in the hands of anyone related to him, nor did the ruler of any part of it exercise power at all comparable to that which Alexander had wielded.

In verse 5 the phrase, "the king of the South" is a very natural way to indicate that ruler whose territory would be farthest south. This was Ptolemy Lagos, who gained control of the land of Egypt. He was the first of Alexander's successors to become well established and gain lasting strength.

Immediately after Alexander's death Ptolemy proved himself to be very shrewd. When the generals assigned members of their group to rule the various sections of the empire, he obtained Egypt as his area of control, thus securing a region that is easy to defend, since there are deserts on three sides. Only by sea could it be easily attacked. As long as Ptolemy could maintain a strong navy he would be almost impregnable.

A few years earlier Alexander had spent almost two years gaining control of Syria and Palestine in order to deprive the Persian navy of its bases in the Mediterranean and thus make his lines of communication secure. Before leading his army eastward against the main centers of the Persian empire, he had invaded Egypt. This might have been a very difficult undertaking had it not been for the fact that the Egyptian people were very ready to revolt against Persia, which had reconquered their land only ten years before, and they therefore looked upon Alexander as a deliverer. He had strengthened this attitude by declaring himself a successor to the ancient pharaohs and worshipping at the

shrines of the Egyptian gods. Ptolemy successfully continued the same methods and was able to use the great resources of Egypt to play a vital part in the political and military affairs of Greece itself. His successors, each of whom was called Ptolemy, ruled Egypt for almost three centuries. The statement that "the king of the South will become strong" is a good summary of the establishment of the Ptolemaic power in Egypt.

Verse 5 reads: "The king of the South will become strong but one of his commanders will become even stronger than he and will rule his own kingdom with great power." This gives a concise summary of what would occur in the region northeast of Egypt. A general named Seleucus had established his authority in Babylon, but in 316 B.C. he was compelled to flee to Egypt where he served as one of Ptolemy's commanders. Four years later, with Ptolemy's help, he made a dash back to Babylon and in 312 B.C. his power there was reestablished. He considered this year as marking a great turning point in his career, and events were dated from it for many centuries thereafter. Even Hebrew manuscripts copied in the Middle Ages are often dated according to the number of years after the time when Seleucus returned to Babylon!

Although the Ptolemies were very strong, often exerting a great deal of influence in Greece itself, their control was generally limited to Egypt and Palestine. Seleucus became "even stronger" than Ptolemy, for he eventually succeeded in gaining control of most of the Asiatic territory that had been included in the Persian empire, including most of Asia Minor, northern Syria, and the regions farther east. Thus verse 5 briefly describes the beginning of two of the kingdoms that came out of Alexander's empire -- the two that most directly concerned Palestine, which was held by the Ptolemies for more than a century and then was taken from them by the Seleucids.

### **Seleucids verses Ptolemies**

Verses 6-20 are concerned with the later history of these

two powerful kingdoms. The strong Macedonian kingdom is referred to but once, and then only obliquely, while the minor kingdoms that came out of Alexander's empire are not mentioned at all. In this section each king descended from Seleucus is called "the king of the North," and each descendant of Ptolemy is called "the king of the South."

The purpose of these verses is to give a running idea of some of the events during this period and thus to lead up to one of the greatest crises in the history of Judaism, which is described in verses 21ff.

This section contains a summary of events that would occur during a period of more than a century. The passage is without parallel in the Bible. Those who hold that the book of Daniel was written during the Maccabean period and that its alleged predictions are really based on events that had already occurred, consider it to be a good summary of a long period of history. Those who consider chapter 11 as a prediction actually given to Daniel in the time of Cyrus see in it a most remarkable and detailed presentation of future events that no human being could possibly have guessed, but that occurred as predicted.

The passage naturally divides into three sections: (1) The sordid events revolving around Laodice and Bernice (vv. 6-9); (2) The career of Antiochus III (vv. 10-19); (3) The reign of Seleucus IV (v. 20).

### **Laodice and Bernice**

(6) After some years, they will become allies. The daughter of the king of the South will go to the king of the North to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power, and he and his power will not last. In those days she will be handed over,\* together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her. (7) One from her family line will arise to take her place. He will attack the forces of the king of the North and enter his fortress; he will fight against them and be victorious. (8) He will also seize their gods,

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\*Heb. 'be given", here a euphemism for death.

their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. For some years he will leave the king of the North alone. (9) Then the king of the North will invade the realm of the king of the South but will retreat to his own country.

The first of these sections begins in the time of Antiochus II, grandson of Seleucus I. After many years of hostility between Egypt and the Seleucid realm, the rulers of these two kingdoms desired to make a lasting peace. To seal the alliance Ptolemy II gave his daughter Bernice in marriage to Antiochus II, the third of the Seleucid kings. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp and Bernice came to the Seleucid capital at Antioch in northern Syria. Antiochus put away his first wife, Laodice, whose sons were already approaching manhood. Greatly displeased, Laodice and her sons withdrew into Asia Minor, where many of the citizens felt that she had been wrongly treated by Antiochus. After a son had been born to Bernice, Antiochus grew weary of her and rejoined Laodice in Ephesus. Soon afterward he died and it was commonly believed that he had been poisoned by Laodice in order to insure her children's right to the throne. All through the Seleucid empire the people were divided between those who favored Laodice and her sons, and those who favored Bernice and her infant son. Laodice had Bernice's infant son kidnapped and killed and eventually succeeded in murdering Bernice and most of her leading supporters. Just at this time Ptolemy II, the father of Bernice, died in Egypt. These events are summarized in verse 6.

Verse 7 very naturally refers to Ptolemy III, the brother of Bernice, as "one from her family line." Greatly angered at the fate of his sister, Ptolemy attacked the Seleucid realm by sea and by land. Seleucus II, the son of Laodice, had become established as king but was obliged to flee to the

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\*Heb. 'be given", here a euphemism for death.

interior of Asia Minor while the army of Ptolemy III made an extensive foray through the eastern parts of his territory and carried back great amounts of booty to Egypt. At the same time Ptolemy's fleet harried the coast of Asia Minor. It is interesting to note that at this point in verse 8 the word "Egypt" is first used for the domain of "the king of the South."

Verse 9 describes an unsuccessful attempt to counter attack against Egypt by Seleucus II, who reigned from 246 227 B.C.

### **Antiochus III and Seleucus IV**

(10) His sons will prepare for war and assemble a great army, which will sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress. (11) Then the king of the South will march out in a rage and fight against the king of the North, who will raise a large army, but it will be defeated. (12) When the army is carried off, the king of the South will be filled with pride and will slaughter many thousands, yet he will not remain triumphant. (13) For the king of the North will muster another army, larger than the first; and after several years, he will advance with a huge army fully equipped. (14) In those times many will rise against the king of the South. The violent men among your own people will rebel in fulfillment of\* the vision, but without success. (15) Then the king of the North will come and build up siege ramps and will capture a fortified city. The forces of the South will be powerless to resist; even their best troops will not have the strength to stand. (16) The invader will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him.

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*\*Better rendered "to establish" as in KJV. In v. 16 the NIV translates this same verb amad as "establish."*

He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have the power to destroy it. (17) He will determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will make an alliance with the king of the South. And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans will not succeed or help him. (18) Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and will take many of them, but a commander will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back upon him. (19) After this, he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own country but will stumble and fall, to be seen no more.

(20) His successor will send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendor. In a few years, however, he will be destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle.

Except for verse 20 this passage deals mainly with the career of Antiochus III, one of the greatest figures in the history of the Seleucid empire.

Seleucus II had two sons. The older, Seleucus III, began to assemble forces for an attack against Egypt, but was killed in a revolt four years after becoming king. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Antiochus III, who defeated Egypt during 36 years of almost constant fighting and reestablished the control of the Seleucids over most of the land they had formerly held.

Since most interpreters agree that these ten verses give a correct summary of the events of this reign we shall not examine them in full detail but only note a few points of special interest. Thus it is generally believed that the statement in verse 14, "many shall rise up against the king of the south," includes a reference to Macedonia, the third of the great kingdoms that came out of Alexander's empire, since at one time its king, Philip V, joined with Antiochus III in a plan to seize and divide between them all the possessions of the Ptolemies.

In the course of the fighting against Egypt armies marched back and forth through Palestine several times. The latter part of verse 14 contains a strange statement: "the violent men among your own people will rebel to establish the vision; but without success." This refers to a faction in the land of Israel that gave its support to Antiochus, in the hope of gaining freedom from Ptolemy. Their vision of a better condition for Israel utterly failed, since Antiochus' son, Antiochus IV (described in vv. 21ff.) caused far more injury to the Jews in a few years than the Ptolemies had caused them in more than a century of rule.

The Egyptian forces made a vigorous effort to retain Palestine, and one of the great battles in the career of Antiochus III occurred at Gaza. In 198 B.C. he gained control of Palestine, which the Ptolemies had held for more than a century. This success is summarized in the phrase in verse 16, "he will establish himself in the Beautiful Land."

Despite these great victories Antiochus was unable to make a complete conquest of Egypt and therefore attempted to gain his ends by diplomacy. In order to establish friendship with the young scion of the house of Ptolemy he gave him his daughter, Cleopatra, in marriage, thinking that she would make her husband support her father's purposes. However, as verse 17 predicts, these plans did not succeed. This daughter of Antiochus III, who became the first influential Egyptian to bear the name Cleopatra, gave her whole loyalty to the land of her husband instead of standing with her father.

If Antiochus III had been content with regaining the great territory that his ancestors had controlled, adding to it Palestine and southern Syria, and also establishing a very considerable amount of control over Egypt, he might well have gone down in history as one of the greatest of ancient kings. But he was not satisfied and this led to his downfall. Verse 18 says: "Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and will take many of them." The term "coastlands," (generally rendered as "isles" in the KJV) is used in Scripture as a designation for all the lands across the sea to the west of Palestine. Antiochus desired to emulate



the exploits of Alexander the Great, and therefore tried to conquer the European area from which Alexander had originally come. This brought him, into conflict with the rising power of Rome.

Only a short time had passed since the Roman republic had begun to take an interest in the eastern Mediterranean regions. Therefore Antiochus was quite amazed when its representatives told him that he must withdraw from Europe. He declared that he had never interfered in Italian affairs and that Rome had no right to interfere in the east. Each side felt that the other had shown inexcusable insolence. After Antiochus entered Greece with a large army and navy the Romans sent their legions to drive him back. Verse 18 continues: "but a commander will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back upon him."

The Roman armies defeated Antiochus at Thermopylae, followed him as he retreated into Asia Minor, and completely overcame him at Magnesia. He was compelled to surrender his navy, to give up most of Asia Minor, to promise to pay a huge indemnity immediately and a large additional sum in each of the following twelve years, and to surrender as hostages 20 men whom the Romans would select. One of these was his younger son, Antiochus, who was later to be known as Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes. The Romans turned over a large part of Asia Minor to a small independent kingdom called Pergamum, which thus became very wealthy for a brief period, but eventually was absorbed by Rome. The rise of the "fourth beast" and its rapaciousness came as a great shock to Antiochus III.

In this brief time Antiochus lost more than he had gained in all his years of fighting. With his treasury empty it was necessary that he try to recoup his finances. He made his eldest son, Seleucus IV, co-king along with him, and went to the eastern part of his dominion in search of funds. When he attempted to rob the treasury of a small temple its guardians suddenly attacked and killed him. These events are summarized in verse 19, which ends with the statement that he "will stumble and fall, to be seen no more."

Verse 20 describes Seleucus IV, who reigned from 187-176 B.C. After the 36-year reign of his father, these eleven years seemed to be "only a few years" (v. 20). The heavy indemnity required by the Roman victors, added to the costs of his father's many years of fighting, forced him to devote himself to raising as much money as possible.

His chief minister conspired against him and killed him. He was "destroyed, yet not in anger or in battle."

These events have been described in considerable detail. There is no other chapter in the Bible in which so many events that are now past history were predicted in one passage. This was not done simply to satisfy curiosity. Most of the predictions were so stated that it would be difficult to know in advance exactly how they would be fulfilled. Yet in almost every case one could easily see, after the events had occurred, how true the predictions had been. The purpose of this long preview was to prepare God's people for one of the greatest crises in their history -- a crisis already predicted in chapter 8 under the symbol of the horn that "started small but grew in power" (8:9).

### **Two Great Crises**

Up to this point everything in the chapter had been leading up to the great crisis about to be described. Before examining the next verses in detail we should make a general survey of the rest of the passage. Verses 21-24 tell about the accession of a king and describe his character. Verses 25-31 tell about his career. Verses 32-35 discuss the fate of God's people. Verses 36-39 again describe the character of a king. Verses 40-45 tell about this king's career. The first three verses of the next chapter discuss the fate of God's people.

Thus Daniel 11:21-12:3 divides naturally into six sections with the first three paralleled by the last three. This inevitably raises the question whether the same person is dealt with in all six sections, or whether a different king is discussed in the second group of three sections.

Nearly all interpreters agree that the first three sections

(vv. 21-35) deal with events connected with Antiochus Epiphanes. Those who hold the Maccabean viewpoint declare that the book of Daniel was written during Antiochus Epiphanes' reign, and say that these verses give a true picture of events with which the writer was familiar because they had already occurred. Most of those who believe that the book was written by a prophet in the time of Nebuchadnezzar consider these verses to be a marvelously accurate prediction of the character and deeds of Antiochus Epiphanes. Up to this point there is little difference in the way interpreters with differing viewpoints interpret the passage.

In sharp contrast to these first three sections, those in the second set are very difficult to fit with what is known of the history of Antiochus Epiphanes. Holders of the Maccabean view attempt to show that the description of a king's character in verses 36-39 can be understood as applying to Antiochus, but such an attempt does not work out, as we shall see when we examine those verses in detail.

Even greater difficulties occur when the attempt is made to fit the statements of verses 40-45 with the events of Antiochus' life. Some writers attempt to consider them as a recapitulation of the events previously described, but this does not work out. The more common view of those who hold the Maccabean viewpoint is to say that verses 40-45 represent the mistaken guesses of the writer as to what was ahead. Many evangelicals feel that verses 36-45 must describe a great future opponent of God's people, with an interval of at least two thousand years between verses 35 and 36.

### **Antiochus Epiphanes**

After saying that Daniel 11:5-20 traces the course of the Seleucid kingdom in considerable detail from its beginning through the reigns of the father and brother of Antiochus, Jerome says that at verse 21 the author suddenly jumps forward to the "man of sin" described by Paul in 2 Thessalonians, and that the rest of the chapter relates to this

great future enemy of God's people.<sup>1</sup> Very few recent commentators accept Jerome's view, as far as verses 21-35 are concerned. By tracing the course of the Seleucid kingdom with so much detail, particularly of the reign of Antiochus' father, it would seem that a line has been drawn directly to Antiochus Epiphanes, to prepare believers for the great crisis that would be produced by this "horn" (cf. p. 139ff) that would stand up in one of the parts of the Grecian kingdom.

One of the important purposes of the book of Daniel was to prepare God's people for this terrible ordeal. This was not the only purpose of the book, as is claimed by those who hold the Maccabean viewpoint, but it was a vital and definite purpose. Although Antiochus was not of great importance in world history, he was of tremendous importance in the history of God's people.

After describing so many events of comparatively little importance to the people of God, and thus leading the history right up to the time of the great crisis that was so vividly described in chapter 8, it would seem strange suddenly to jump forward more than two thousand years without first discussing this terrible crisis.

In chapter 8 much detail about this important crisis had already been presented. It showed the background of Antiochus Epiphanes in the latter part of the third or Grecian kingdom, the way he obtained his throne, his exaltation of himself, his great opposition to God's people, his attempts to corrupt the people by flattery and his subsequent use of brutal and cruel persecution. It predicted that he would stop the regular ceremonies and terribly desecrate the temple. It said that this desecration would come to an end, and that Antiochus would be "destroyed, but not by human power" (8:25). Some of these facts are now touched upon rather briefly and much material is added. His attacks on foreign nations, which were briefly summarized in 8:9, are described in more detail, particularly those against Egypt. Historical scholars agree that verses 21-35 give a remarkably accurate picture of the outstanding features of the crisis that centered around Antiochus

Epiphanes. Holders of the Maccabean view consider these verses to be history, pretending to be prediction. Those who believe that the prophet Daniel was the author, consider them to be a remarkable prediction, revealed to Daniel more than three hundred years in advance.

### **Accession and Character of Antiochus**

(21) He will be succeeded by a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue. (22) Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant\* will be destroyed. (23) After coming to an agreement with him, he will act deceitfully, and with only a few people he will rise to power. (24) When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his fathers nor his forefathers did. He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses -- but only for a time.

The character of Antiochus is summarized in the statements in verse 21 that he will be a "contemptible person," who will "invade the kingdom" and "seize it through intrigue" and by the statement in verse 23 that he will "act deceitfully."

The statement that Antiochus was contemptible was true in a general sense and also in a very specific one.

In the general sense it can be pointed out that Antiochus' contemporaries considered him an erratic type of individual. Although he gloried in his title of Epiphanes, "the manifest god," many preferred to call him Epimanes, which means "a

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*\*Better than "the prince of the covenant" (KJV), as there is no article in the original Hebrew.*

madman." Though praised to his face, he was quite generally despised.

In a specific sense the term may represent the attitude toward Antiochus before he became king. As the verse says, his people did not plan to give him the honor of royalty but considered him as of no particular account. Many years had passed since he had been in Syria and he was not next in line to the throne. The authorities in the Seleucid kingdom had no desire to give the honor of the kingdom to Antiochus, but he made a deal with the king of Pergamum, who furnished him with money and supplies and enabled him quickly to enter Syria, where he obtained the kingdom by clever maneuvering and quickly disposed of those who opposed him.

In 11:21 the KJV says "he shall come in peaceably." Instead of "peaceably" most recent translations render *b<sup>e</sup>shalwah* as "without warning," "in a time of tranquility," or "unawares." None of these translations give the exact force of the original. The idea is that those to whom he came did not realize his purpose and therefore felt safe. The same word was used in 8:25 to indicate the destruction by his soldiers of men who had been led to believe that the soldiers had come as friends. It occurs again in 11:24 to describe his seizure of valuable property from men who did not realize his intentions.

Verse 22 might be taken as a general summary of his various conquests, but would seem more probably to refer specifically to his success in overcoming opposition to his becoming king. The last phrase in this verse, "a prince of the covenant," has been interpreted in various ways. Perhaps it points to some unfaithfulness toward the king of Pergamum, with whom he had made a covenant that resulted in that king's giving him help toward getting the throne. Most interpreters take it as referring to the murder of Onias, a former high priest, but this seems out of place in the context, since it did not occur until five years after he became king, and also after many of the activities described in verse 24.

As predicted in verse 23, Antiochus worked deceitfully

and became strong after making his league with the king of Pergamum, though he had begun with only a small group of supporters.

Verse 24 describes two aspects of Antiochus' character. It tells of the extortions by which he obtained money and resources from the wealthiest parts of the province (i.e., of Syria and Palestine). Claiming to be a god he held that all the property of the sanctuaries belonged to him and seized the treasures of various temples, including the temple at Jerusalem. Yet he differed from his fathers in that he did not use this wealth only for political purposes or for his own pleasure, but scattered much of it among his friends, lavishly giving gifts to those he liked or even to casual strangers he happened to meet. Sometimes he would walk through the streets scattering coins and laughing as people scrambled for them. Antiochus built pagan temples in various Greek cities, including a colossal temple of Olympian Zeus in Athens. The character of Antiochus combined great stinginess with generous prodigality and he could quickly change from one to the other.

### **The Career of Antiochus Epiphanes**

(25) "With a large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South. The king of the South will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. (26) Those who eat from the king's provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle. (27) The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time. (28) The king of the North will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will take action against it and then return to his own country.

(29) "At the appointed time he will invade the South again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before. (30) Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart. Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant.

(31) "His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation.

Verse 25 begins an account of Antiochus' relations with Egypt. His sister, Cleopatra (already mentioned in v. 17), had ruled Egypt after the death of her husband, Ptolemy V, since her children were very young. After her death the advisors of Ptolemy VI, who was still in his teens, gathered a large army with the intention of trying to reconquer Palestine and southern Syria, which had been seized by Antiochus' father, after having been ruled by the Ptolemies for over a century. Hearing of this Antiochus quickly marched to Egypt, defeated the Egyptian forces, and gained possession of the young Ptolemy VI. Thereupon some of the Egyptian leaders declared that Ptolemy VI was no longer king, and made his younger brother king in his place, as Ptolemy VII. They then obtained possession of Alexandria and prepared for a siege. As verse 26 indicates, many of those who belonged to the household of Ptolemy VI turned against him. His army had been overwhelmed and many of his people slain, and he himself was a prisoner of his uncle.

At this point it is probable that Antiochus could have conquered all of Egypt and incorporated it into his empire, though the capture of Alexandria might have taken considerable time and involved rather serious losses. Since he had captured Ptolemy VI, who was his nephew, he decided to use trickery instead of force. Rather than proceed further with his conquests, he declared that he had no desire



except to restore his nephew to the throne to which he was entitled. Envoys were sent to other Countries to assure them that this was Antiochus' only purpose in Egypt.

Verse 27 tells how the two kings would pretend friendship toward each other, though neither would mean what he said. The youthful Egyptian king would try to persuade his uncle that if the invaders would leave Egypt its people would rally around the legitimate king and he would then rule Egypt in friendly fashion, and would give Antiochus whatever he might desire. The uncle would falsely declare that his only purpose was to secure the legitimate rights of his nephew. Thus these two kings would "sit at the same table and lie to each other."

The verse continues: "But to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time." As predicted, the schemes of both men failed. Antiochus, thinking himself a master of strategy, put trust in the lying promises of his nephew and withdrew his forces from Egypt. As soon as he had done so, the nephew made peace with his brother, leaving Antiochus without any power in Egypt except for the one border town of Pelusium in which he had left a strong garrison. Yet the plans of Ptolemy VI also failed, for the supporters of Ptolemy VII did not give their full support to Ptolemy VI but insisted that the two brothers reign as joint kings, thus leaving Egypt in a state of weakness, because of lack of unified leadership.

In this context it is obvious that the statement in verse 27, "an end will still come at the appointed time" does not refer to something that would happen thousands of years later, but is simply a declaration that within a limited period of time the plans of both kings would fail.

Verse 28 tells of Antiochus' return to Asia, carrying a great amount of plunder. On the way he passed through Palestine and made vigorous efforts to stop all Jewish practices that were out of line with his Hellenistic beliefs. As verse 28 says, "his heart will be set against the holy covenant." The verse goes on to say that after taking action in the land of Israel against the holy covenant he will continue his return to his own land.

Verse 29 predicts that "at the appointed time" (i.e. when failure of his strategy becomes obvious) Antiochus will make another expedition against Egypt. In this case the situation will not be the same as before. There will be three important differences: (1) When Antiochus made his first expedition the Egyptians were preparing a huge force to reconquer Palestine and Antiochus could reasonably say that he was only defending his own land. This will no longer be the case. (2) He will not be able, as in the latter part of the former expedition, to say that he is merely trying to defend the rights of his nephew, since his nephew will be standing with the other Egyptians who oppose Syrian influence in Egypt. (3) Although it might reasonably be expected that he would now be able to conquer Egypt, his expedition will be a total failure, because of a new factor that was not involved on the former occasion.

At the time of Antiochus' first Egyptian expedition Rome was too busy to concern itself with the Seleucids or the Ptolemies, since it was then engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Macedonia, the other of the three great kingdoms that had been formed from Alexander's empire. Now the situation was different. Rome had successfully terminated its third Macedonian war and had gained full control of that entire region.

When a modern democracy has won a great war, it often tends to pay no further attention to distant areas, thinking that success in war has solved all its problems. Rome was different. In the second century, B. C., it was still a republic, but it had a permanent senate composed of men who had previously held high office in the government. Not having to seek reelection, the senators could give their full attention to the world-wide interests of their country. When a war was finished they would decide how to make its results permanent. This is one of the reasons why Rome continued for so many centuries to be an important force in the world. After the victory over Macedonia its leaders decided not to permit any other eastern nation to become powerful enough to endanger Roman supremacy.

Verse 30 begins with the statement: "Ships of the western

coastlands<sup>2</sup> will oppose him, and he will lose heart." These words are a prediction of one of the most dramatic events in ancient history. Antiochus had followed his previous line of attack. With Pelusium as a base, he entered Egypt somewhat to the south of Alexandria, where his two nephews were busily making preparations for resistance preparations that appeared doomed to failure. All Egypt lay before him and could be overrun fairly easily.

At this juncture Antiochus heard that his camp was being approached by an embassy from Rome. The incident that followed was one that many Romans liked to remember.

The embassy was led by Gaius Popillius Laenas, with whom Antiochus had been on friendly terms when both were young men in Rome. Antiochus went out to meet Laenas, expecting to revive the former comradeship. But Laenas greeted him coldly, with no sign of friendship or affability, and handed him a tablet saying: "I have a message for you from the Roman senate." Antiochus said: "Let's have dinner and talk over old times, and then I will read the message." Laenas answered: "The message must be read immediately." Antiochus looked at the tablet and found that it contained a demand by the Roman senate that he immediately withdraw all his troops from Egypt, He said: "I will have to consider this and discuss it with some of my friends."

Laenas immediately drew a circle around Antiochus with a vinestick and said: "You may consider as long as you remain in this circle."

Seeing the determination of the Roman envoy and remembering the terrible disasters that had befallen his father when he opposed Rome Antiochus immediately said: "Well, that's different. Of course I'll do what the Roman senate asks." Immediately Laenas' whole manner changed. He now greeted Antiochus as an old friend.

Antiochus tried to conceal his irritation. He gave a banquet in honor of the Roman envoys and ordered his troops to leave Egypt at once. Soon he sent to the Romans and to heads of all the eastern nations invitations to be his guests at a series of great festivals in Syria.

The verse continues: "Then he will turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant." Antiochus tried to hide his disappointment and frustration from the world while pouring out his burning anger against the seemingly helpless Jews. After using gifts and flattery to persuade as many Jews as possible to forsake the religion of their fathers, he introduced severe persecution. Soldiers were sent with orders to kill any woman who had her child circumcised and to compel every Jew to sacrifice to Zeus. The regular ceremonies of the temple were stopped and an altar of Zeus was placed above the altar of the Lord, so polluting the sanctuary that no pious Jew could worship there.

### **The Fate of God's People: The Maccabean Revolt**

(32) With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him. (33) Those who are wise will instruct many, though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered. (34) When they fall, they will receive a little help, and many who are not sincere will join them. (35) Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time.

Verses 32-35 describe the Maccabean uprising. Although many Jews were corrupted by the king's favor, others lost their lives rather than submit, and some resisted by force. One of these was Mattathias, an elderly priest from the little town of Modin. When the king's soldiers tried to compel everyone in Modin to sacrifice to the heathen gods, Mattathias forcibly resisted them and pulled down the pagan altar. Then he and his five sons fled into the wilderness where other groups were already hiding. Under the leadership of Mattathias these refugees began guerilla operations. When the priest died he was succeeded by his son, Judas Maccabeus, who proved to have unusual military

ability. His guerilla bands would suddenly attack the Syrians and then retreat into mountain hideouts. As verse 33 points out, many of Judas' people fell by the sword, were burned, captured or plundered. Yet they eventually succeeded in retaking Jerusalem and reestablishing the temple worship. These verses predict their struggles and praise those who would make the supreme sacrifice for their faith.

Verse 34 includes a somber note that was fulfilled in history. It says: "Many who are not sincere will join them." When the Maccabees began to gain decisive victories, other Jews came to join their efforts. Although some were moved by desire to stand for God's truth, many had inferior motives. Some joined purely because of nationalistic feeling and some for selfish reasons, thinking they could advance themselves better by joining this group of stouthearted men than by supporting a king who was notoriously changeable.

Verse 35 stresses the individual working of God's spirit in cleansing and purifying His people. These verses contain no specific promise that the Maccabees will win, but the last half of verse 35 gives assurance that the persecution will only continue until the time that God has appointed for its end. As we noticed in our study of Daniel 8 (pp. 151-3) there is no warrant for thinking that such phrases as "the time of the end" or "the appointed time" must always look forward to the time of Antichrist, more than 2000 years later. Here we have God's assurance that the persecution started by Antiochus will end at God's appointed time.

After a long struggle the Maccabees succeeded in gaining complete freedom from Syrian control, and made treaties of friendship and mutual support with Rome and with Sparta. Although these cities did not actually send aid, the treaties gave the Jewish state an international position as an independent unit, and it continued in virtual independence for a number of years, while resisting the efforts of Antiochus' successors to reestablish Syrian authority. Eventually the Seleucid kings gave up their hope of reconquering the Jewish state and its independence lasted almost a century, until the time when the Romans finally put an end to the Seleucid realm and also marched into the land of Israel and

incorporated it into the regions they controlled, thus beginning a new period of captivity that would continue until A.D. 1948, when a Jewish state was reestablished.

### **Unspecified Interval**

Antiochus' character and accession were described in verses 21-23; an account of his activities followed in verses 24-31; there was an account of the fate of the true believers in verses 32-35. Next come three similar passages, in which the character and attitudes of a king are described in verses 36-39, his specific activities are outlined in verses 40-45, and the fate of the true believers is depicted in 12:1-3. Most of those who do not accept the Maccabean view of the origin of the book of Daniel are convinced that at least the last two-thirds of this second series of passages must deal with someone other than Antiochus and describe events that even now are still future, and that therefore an interval of many centuries must occur somewhere in the chapter.

All interpreters agree that chapters 10, 11 and 12 form a continuous account of one vision, but it could hardly be suggested that the resurrection described in 12:2 has yet occurred. Therefore from any viewpoint a very long interval must be assumed somewhere between 11:20 and 12:2. There are serious objections to Jerome's idea that this interval occurs between verse 21 and verse 22, but no such difficulties are involved in finding one between verse 35 and verse 36 (or between verse 39 and verse 40). Many interpreters, even including some who deny the possibility of finding such an interval anywhere in chapter 2 or 9 tacitly agree that in chapter 11 an interval of at least two thousand years must be found at or near this point, since they are convinced that the latter verses of the chapter describe the activities of "the man of lawlessness" (2 Thes. 2:3) shortly before the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven.

Supporters of the Maccabean viewpoint attempt the difficult task of trying to relate the remainder of chapter 11 to the career of Antiochus Epiphanes.

### **The Character of "the king"**

(36) "The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. (37) He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all. (38) Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. (39) He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price.

Except for the words "of a foreign god," verse 39 could fit almost any great tyrant, as could also the first sentence in verse 36. The statement that he "will say unheard-of things against the God of gods" (v. 36) could apply to any great anti-God figure. But the rest of this first section is very difficult to relate to Antiochus. I shall list below, in the order in which they occur, the statements that seem inappropriate to a description of this Seleucid king:

- A. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god (v. 36)
- B. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed (v. 36)
- C. He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers (v. 37)
- D. Or for the one desired by women (v. 37)

- E. Nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all (v. 37)
- F. Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses (v. 38)
- G. A god unknown to his fathers he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts (v. 38)
- H. He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him (v. 39)

Since statement B is not directly concerned with the king's attitude toward the supernatural, we shall look at it first. The word here translated "wrath" is generally used in relation to God's anger, but can also be used of human anger. In either case the statement does not fit what is known of Antiochus. He had little prosperity in the latter part of his reign, when his treasury was becoming empty and the Jewish revolt was beginning to succeed. The opposition to the Jewish law that he set in motion continued for a time after his death, and the people of God were still under severe pressure after he was removed from the scene. No matter how the phrase is interpreted it does not fit the history of Antiochus.

Statements A, C and E say that the king will magnify himself above every god, that he will not regard the gods of his fathers, and that he will not regard any god. These negative statements are very hard to relate to what is known historically of Antiochus, for a large part of his activity consisted in giving glory to the pagan gods of Greece. He erected a great statue of Zeus in Antioch and built many temples in honor of the Greek gods, including the magnificent temple of Zeus in Athens. In our own day there are many who would call themselves atheists or agnostics and say that they do not regard any god, but this was a rare attitude in the time of the Seleucids and was certainly not true of Antiochus.

The assertion that he will magnify himself above every



god certainly does not fit what is known of Antiochus who gave such honor to Zeus and the other gods of Greece. It is true that he was very proud of his title, "Epiphanes," which described him as a god, and he would seem to have been the first of the Seleucids actually to put such a title on his coins. Yet this represented an exaltation of himself above human beings, not an exaltation above the great gods of Greece. The many temples that he built, as well as his attempt to force the Jews to worship Greek gods, make it impossible to think of him as the one described in statements A, C and E.

It has been said that there is ground for thinking that Antiochus identified himself with the god Zeus. Even if this should be proved it would not mean that he exalted himself above every god or that he did not regard any god.

In connection with statement C it has been suggested that Antiochus showed disregard for Apollo, the alleged ancestor of the Seleucid kings, by so greatly honoring Zeus. Such a statement, however, is not in line with fact. As all Greeks recognized the supremacy of Zeus, the father of the gods, over Apollo, who was considered his son, it is hardly reasonable to count veneration of Zeus as indicating disregard of Apollo.

The Seleucid kings who preceded Antiochus Epiphanes generally pictured the god Apollo on their emblems, since they thought of him as the founder of the dynasty. In later years their emblems were more apt to picture Zeus, the king of the gods. This would show a desire to exalt themselves by claiming connection with the head of the pantheon, but could hardly be considered as a fulfillment of the statement "neither shall he regard the gods of his fathers."

In statement C the Hebrew word *èlohim* may be translated "God" or "gods." The KJV renders this word as "God" more than two thousand times and as "gods" more than two hundred times. In neither case could the statement reasonably apply to Antiochus.

There is great disagreement as to what is meant by statement D. Some think that it must in some way refer to a deity. One writer has suggested that perhaps Antiochus

tried to extirpate a lascivious cult that was well established in Syria, but there is no historical evidence for this. If the statement refers to events that in our day are still future, it may be impossible to tell in advance exactly what it will mean, but this should become clear when it occurs.

Statements F, G and H seem to contradict statements A, C and E. The apparent contradiction is removed if one interprets these last three statements as referring to the attitude of an atheist toward principles or ideas, rather than to that of an ancient king toward deities. Devotion to materialism would be a natural way to understand statement F, with its reference to a "god of fortresses." Such a statement was rather incomprehensible in ancient times, so it was natural for the translators of the Septuagint to interpret the word as a proper name and simply transliterate it. This precedent was followed by Jerome, who rendered it in the Latin Vulgate as "the god Maozim," but there is no evidence that any god with this name was known in the time of Antiochus or at any subsequent period. The interpretation that considers it as representing devotion to materialism or to some other atheistic attitude gives sense in the context and makes it possible to understand statements F, G and H in such a way as not to contradict statements A, C and E.

Even though some ancient kings may have made material force and power their real gods, all found it expedient to show great regard for the established gods of their community. The attitude of brazenly making force one's god and not regarding any supernatural being did not become common until modern times. At present more than a third of the earth is dominated by men who substitute atheistic materialism for religion.

In view of the many ways the statements cited above contradict the known facts about Antiochus, it is surprising to find that there are a few interpreters who place the long interval between Antiochus and "the man of lawlessness" at the end of verse 39, instead of at the end of verse 35. Perhaps this is due to the fact that verse 40 begins with the phrase, "at the time of the end." As we saw in our

consideration of chapter 8, the word "end" is often used in Scripture to indicate the conclusion of a large or small period of time, or simply to designate its latter part. In this particular context it can point to the activities of "the man of lawlessness" during the latter part of his career, after he would become well established. The English word "eventually" might give a rather good idea of what the phrase means in the context.

Verses 40-45 depict specific activities of a king. Holders of the Maccabean view say that these verses present the fact of Antiochus' death, yet have to admit that many of its statements do not fit with what is known of the latter part of the reign of Antiochus.

Some who hold the Maccabean view have said that verses 40-44 describe another attack against Egypt by Antiochus. Most of them, however, reject this idea. They give two reasons: (1) There is no historical evidence of another such expedition by Antiochus. (2) Antiochus had been vigorously ordered by the Romans to give up all that he had gained in Egypt and had recognized the potential force behind their demands so strongly that he submitted completely and returned to Syria empty-handed. If he had made another such attack later on we can be sure that the Romans would have reacted so vigorously that the ensuing events would have left definite evidence in the historical record.

Some have suggested that this account of another expedition against Egypt is really a summary of the earlier portions of the account of the life of Antiochus. This is quite contrary to the impression made by the statements and would seem to be ruled out by the phrase, "at the time of the end," which introduces them. In addition, the details in these verses are quite different from those of his earlier expeditions. The events predicted in verses 40-45 do not correspond to the known facts about any part of Antiochus' life. Thus there is no evidence of his being disturbed by reports "from the east and the north" (v. 44), though there is abundant historical evidence for the effects of the tidings from the west mentioned earlier, as we saw in our

examination of verse 30. Similarly the statement in verse 45 that he will establish a temporary headquarters "between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain" does not correspond to anything known about the life of Antiochus, nor do the statements about Edom, Moab and Ammon in verse 41 or those about the Libyans and the Nubians in verse 43.

There is really only one statement in this whole section that could properly be applied to Antiochus. That is its last phrase: "he will come to his end, and no one will help him." While this might correctly describe the end of Antiochus, it is rather general in nature and could equally well be said of many other historical figures.

In recent years the most common view of those who hold the Maccabean viewpoint has been that verses 40-45 represent the imaginings of a writer as to what he hoped would happen in the future. This interpretation is naturally quite impossible to those who accept Daniel as part of God's inerrant Word. To one who regards Daniel as a true prophet of God speaking by divine revelation, the only conclusion possible is that this section describes "the lawless one" who, Paul declares, "the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming" (2 Thess. 2:8).

Like the third passage in the account of Antiochus Epiphanes, the third passage in this group deals with the fate of God's people (12:1-3).

### **The Fate of God's People**

(12:1) At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress 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. (2) Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. (3) Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and

those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Verse 1 describes in general terms the unparalleled time of trouble that will result from the activities of the Antichrist. There is here no description, as in 11:32-33, of a time of great fighting and conflict in which the people of God will resist the forces of evil. After predicting an unparalleled "time of distress," the end of verse 1 presents a clear assurance of deliverance and verse 2 contains the wonderful promise of resurrection and everlasting life. Verse 3 describes the eternal glory of those who turn many to righteousness. These verses, like verses 40-45 do not fit the time of Antiochus, but definitely point to something that has not yet occurred.

Thus we have noticed the remarkable parallel between the three sections dealing with Antichrist and the three earlier ones about Antiochus Epiphanes, and also have observed the striking differences between the two groups of passages. Many have tried to build a detailed picture of future events from this latter group of passages. Such an undertaking is outside the scope of the present writing.

It is easy to see that Daniel 11:2-20 gives a remarkable summary of the history from the time of Cyrus to the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes and that verses 21-35 give a very accurate account of the principal events in the reign of this wicked king. The exact relevance of practically every statement in this long section is easily demonstrated. As these events unfolded, believers could see that the predictions were being fulfilled. Thus their faith in God would be strengthened and they would realize anew that the Lord controls all things and makes everything come to pass at His "appointed time."

Yet here, as in the case of the predictions about the life of Christ, it is doubtful that a reader could know in advance much detail about the events that would occur. While the great outlines are clear, the details are often given in rather cryptic language. After the event it is easy to see that prophecy has been fulfilled, but it is usually impossible to

work out the details with any fullness in advance. In the present volume it is our primary objective to see how prophecy has been fulfilled in the past and to learn principles of interpretation as we see the relation between the predictions and their fulfillment. It is an equally vital part of our task to distinguish between the passages that predict events that have already occurred, and those that clearly refer to what is yet to come.

The attempt to understand as much as possible about events that are still future requires great care. Full understanding of such predictions would require that they be brought into relationship with all relevant passages elsewhere in Scripture. In the present study we are not at tempting such a task because of our determination to make every possible effort to avoid circular reasoning. Before such passages can be properly studied in relation to one another it is desirable that thoroughly objective studies of all such passages in other Bible books be made, examining each passage by itself before seeking to relate them to one another. That task is a separate one, not within the compass of the present effort.

### Notes

- <sup>^1</sup> On pages 120 to 128 of his commentary on Daniel, Jerome shows how 11:5-20 traces the course of the Seleucid kingdom in considerable detail through the reigns of the father and brother of Antiochus. Then he mentions Porphyry's claim that all the material from 11:21 to the end of the book deals with the actions of Antiochus himself. Jerome says: "those of our persuasion believe all these things are spoken prophetically of the Antichrist who is to arrive in the end." Thus he believes that there is a long unmentioned interval between vv. 20 and 21. Recognizing, however, that vv. 21-35 include remarkable pictures of events that occurred in connection with the life of Antiochus, Jerome says that Antiochus "is to be regarded as a type of the Antichrist, and those things which happened to him in a preliminary way are to be completely fulfilled in the case of Antichrist." The danger of this type of interpretation has been pointed out above (pp. 53-55). One should always try to interpret a detailed prediction as referring specifically to one individual or to one event. Verses 21 through 35 contain a remarkably accurate picture of the character and reign of Antiochus, but it is very difficult to find detailed statements in chapter 11 after verse 35 that can reasonably be said to fit with the known facts about this great persecutor.

- <sup>2</sup> This the only place where the NIV translates *Kittim* as "the western coastlands." The word, which occurs six times in the Old Testament, is always transliterated as "Chittim" in the KJV. It may originally have referred to Cyprus but it came to be used for all the coastlands west of the land of Israel.

## Daniel 12:4-13 -- Conclusion to the Book

The conclusion to the section of the book of Daniel that runs through chapters 10-12 -- the only section of the book that goes beyond the limits of a single chapter -- is also a conclusion to the book as a whole. Its first verse is still part of the long monologue (11:2-12:4) of the man dressed in linen garments (cf. 10:5). Although it consists of only ten verses this conclusion presents many ideas and involves a considerable number of problems.

Since verses 4 to 12 can be better understood if arranged in accordance with the type of material, whether simply a narrative of something Daniel saw happen in his vision (N), a question someone asked (Q), a prediction (P), or a command (C), the material will be arranged in accordance with these four categories:

- Narrative
- Question
- Command
- Prediction

- C (4) "But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end" [literally, "a time of end"].
- P "Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." [better, "and knowledge shall be increased" (KJV)].
- N (5) Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me stood two others, one on this bank of the river and one on the opposite bank.



- (6) One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river,
- Q "How long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?"
- N (7) The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, lifted his right hand and his left hand to ward heaven, and I heard him swear by him who lives forever, saying,
- P "It will be for a time, times, and half a time. When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed."
- N (8) I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked,
- Q "My lord," [not the term that so often represents the deity, but one frequently used to address a prominent human being] "what will the outcome of all this be?" [literally, "what is the latter part of these?"]
- C (9) He replied, "Go your way, Daniel,
- P because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end." [better, "a time of end"] (10) "Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand. (11) From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. (12) Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.
- C (13) As for you, go your way till the end.
- P You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."

This conclusion to Daniel's book is still part of his last vision, which runs through chapters 10-12. Its narrative portions are clearly expressed and raise no problems, but some aspects of the commands, of the predictions, and even of the questions need to be discussed. These will be examined in the order in which they occur. First, however, we need to mention three subjects on which this conclusion can be expected to touch:

1. The book of Daniel is more autobiographical than some of the other prophetic books. Many of its chapters deal with important events in Daniel's career. Even in the prophetic chapters his feelings and emotions are described at a number of points: cf. 7:15, 28; 8:17, 27; 10:8-10, 11c, 16-17. Note the words of personal comfort to Daniel in 10:11 and 19. We will need to keep this aspect in mind if we are properly to understand verses 9 and 13 of this chapter.
2. Since most of the predictions in Daniel's vision would be of greater importance to later times than to his own, it would be especially important that the book be carefully preserved. This need is mentioned in verses 4 and 9.
3. In view of the great amount of attention given in the book to two great crises, one under Antiochus in the second century before Christ and the other expected to occur under Antichrist near the end of the present age, it is natural to expect the conclusion to say something about each of these crises. A crisis is discussed in the prediction in the latter part of verse 7, and one is discussed in verses 10-12. It would seem very strange if one of the two previously mentioned crises were discussed in both of these passages and the other not mentioned in the conclusion at all.

The passage begins with a command to Daniel: "close up and seal the words of the scroll until a time of end" (v. 4).

This command assumes that Daniel's book is soon to be finished, and orders Daniel to close and seal it. In a very few cases the word "seal" is used in the Old Testament for closing something up so that it is not available, as in sealing a fountain, but this is not its usual significance. It generally refers either to authenticating something or to protecting and preserving it for a later purpose, as in sealing a contract or a letter.<sup>1</sup> Daniel must order that the words of the scroll be carefully preserved "until a time of end"<sup>2</sup> (i.e., the time

of their fulfillment). The scroll would include the complete record of Daniel's experiences and visions. As Keil points out, transcriptions would doubtless be made available, since they would be needed in the dangerous times that it describes.<sup>3</sup>

We can assume that Daniel and his successors carefully observed the command to close up and certify the scroll. The need of this special care can be illustrated by the many errors and changes that came into the Greek translation of the book of Daniel in the course of copying and recopying -- so many that Theodotion found it necessary to make a new translation, which was then substituted in most of the extant copies of the Septuagint. The fact that more additions were made to the Greek translation of this book than to any other part of Scripture emphasizes the necessity of this particular command.

This command is followed by a prediction, which most translators render: "Many will go here and there and knowledge will be increased."<sup>4</sup> Some writers have taken this sentence as a prediction that in the last days there will be a great increase in travel and also in knowledge. Most interpreters, however, starting as early as St. Jerome, have considered the second clause as closely connected with the first, so that the increase of knowledge would be a result of the fact that many "go here and there," hunting through the document, and comparing Scripture with Scripture to find God's truth.

At first sight the question at the end of verse 6 might seem to ask how much time would elapse before the occurrence of "these astonishing things," but the answer in verse 7 interprets the question as meaning: "How long will it be from the beginning of these events to their end?" This answer has been taken by most interpreters as describing the length of the crisis rather than its distance from the time when Daniel had his vision.

This is the first of two predictions about great future crises. It is reasonable to expect it to refer to one of the two that have already been described in the book and most likely to the one most recently discussed. That would be the

one under Antichrist, predicted in 11:36-12:1, only a few verses earlier and also in 7:8, 20-22 and 24-26. This interpretation is supported by the points in common between the words in 12:7 and those in the previous accounts of this crisis. The most obvious similarity is the occurrence of the phrase "a time, times, and half a time" which is found in Daniel 7:25 as the length of time during which the saints will be handed over to the Antichrist. A still greater point of similarity is the fact that Daniel 12:7 says "When the power of the holy people has been finally broken, all these things will be completed" while Daniel 7:21-22 speaks of the boastful horn as waging war "against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came" and 11:36 predicted that "he will be successful until the time of wrath is completed."

Thus the crisis described in v. 7 is very different from the one produced by Antiochus, which came to an end through the valiant fighting of the Maccabees.<sup>5</sup>

In verse 8 Daniel tells of his difficulty in understanding what had been said about one of the crises, and proceeds to ask for information about the other. In view of the answer he receives we can understand his question as meaning: What will be the end (latter part) of these other events?

Before answering Daniel's question the messenger gives him some words of encouragement, expressed in the form of a command, plus a prediction. The command, "Go your way Daniel," is really an assurance that Daniel can continue his own activities without fear "because the words are closed up and sealed until a time of end."

This assertion might suggest that Daniel had already carried out the command to seal the words of the scroll (v. 4), but the continuous account of the vision allows no time when that could have occurred. Therefore it seems likely that God is assuring Daniel that, though Daniel's duty to preserve the scroll intact is still an important factor, God is overseeing his activity and will protect this portion of His inerrant Word even after Daniel has passed on. Since this assurance is referring to divine activity it may also include

another aspect of the idea of sealing: it can mean that part of the import of God's message will not be available to its readers until near the time to which the predictions refer. The promise had already been given that at a future time many would discover new truth while going back and forth through the sacred writings (v. 4). These words suggest that a vital part of the meaning of the words will not be fully understood until the time of their fulfillment is near.<sup>6</sup> For the present it is closed up and sealed.

After these preliminary words the messenger answers Daniel's question. It is reasonable to expect that the next three verses will deal with the other crisis -- the one caused by Antiochus' attempt to destroy the Jewish religion. Verse 10 describes the effect of the persecution on two classes of people, repeating a part of the prediction in 11:31-35 about the crisis caused by Antiochus. The wise "will be purified, made spotless and refined." This repeats the promise given at 11:35, using the same three Hebrew words, though in a slightly different order. The wicked, however, will continue to be wicked and will not understand.

The two predictions in chapter 12 should be taken as referring to two different crises.

It is easy to fit the statements in verses 10-12 with the known facts about the attempt of Antiochus to destroy the Jewish religion, but none of the known facts about the history of that time correspond to the events predicted in verse 7. Holders of the Maccabean view say that verse 7 and all the other predictions that do not fit with the history of Antiochus merely represent the guesses and hopes of the unknown writer, but we who consider the book to be divinely inspired, free from error, and written by a man who lived in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, believe that the book contains predictions about two crises that should not be confused, and that one of these crises, the one involving Antichrist, has not yet occurred.

It is disappointing, however, to find evangelical writers making a mistake similar to that of those who hold the Maccabean viewpoint, by trying to find in every passage a reference to the crisis that will be produced by

Antichrist. There are instances as early as the time of Jerome of evangelical writers seeking to find Antichrist even in passages that are obviously speaking of the crisis produced by Antiochus. Some do this by assigning to the crisis described in chapter 7, passages that clearly refer to the crisis described in chapter 8, and some who recognize that parts of it refer to the persecution under Antiochus say that statements about him should be considered as also having a typical fulfillment in Antichrist. Since we know nothing about the future Antichrist except what is predicted in the Scripture, there is no way to disprove the possibility that similar events might occur, but sound principles of interpretation require that each statement in prophecy be expected to have only one fulfillment unless there is clear evidence that the statement points to more than one event. Although many commentators fail to recognize it, there are cogent reasons for considering that 12:7 and 12:10-12 deal with two different series of events.

There is a great difference between the prediction in verse 7 and the one in verses 10-12. Verse 7 involves two statements: (1) the power of the holy people is to be finally broken; (2) when this is done, "all these things will be completed."

There is no statement in verses 10-12 that corresponds to either of these two predictions in verse 7. They contain no suggestion that the power of the holy people is to be shattered. Historically, the very opposite is true; so far from being finally broken, the power of the Maccabees kept growing stronger, until in the end they were able to gain for Judea complete freedom from the power of the Seleucid rulers.

The second statement in verse 7, that "all these things will be completed," gives the impression of predicting an eschatological event. In verses 10-12 one gains the opposite impression. Thus it says: "the wicked will continue to be wicked." The impression is given that, as in the historical crisis under Antiochus, the goal is not establishment of a new situation, but merely restoration of the conditions that preceded the actions of Antiochus, and in fact, aside from

the eventual winning of political independence for Judea, this is what actually occurred.

Each of these predictions has much in common with the earlier predictions of one crisis and little or nothing in common with the other. Thus verse 7 is reminiscent of the second sentence in 7:25: "The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time." That sentence was immediately followed by the prediction of a supernatural intervention leading to the establishment of a new situation that is to last forever, thus corresponding to the establishment of the universal kingdom of righteousness predicted in chapters 2 and 7.<sup>7</sup> Similarly the prediction of the persecution by Antichrist in 12:1 is immediately followed by a prediction of the resurrection.

No such eschatological feature occurred in the earlier predictions of the persecution by Antiochus, either in chapter 8 or in 11:21-35. Like 12:10-12 these passages predict the abolition of certain religious rites for a limited period of time, followed by their resumption, but there is no suggestion of any great universal change.

In view of these facts it would seem evident that verse 7 refers to the crisis under Antichrist and that verses 10-12 refer to the crisis under Antiochus.

In verses 11-12 the messenger speaks of the desecration of the sanctuary and promises that the abominations produced by Antiochus' persecution will continue only for a limited time:

11. From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. 12. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.<sup>12</sup>

According to 1 Maccabees the desecration of the temple lasted about three years. Many interpreters consider the figure of "2300 evenings and mornings" in Daniel 8:14 to represent 1150 days, about two months more than three years. The "1290 days" in 12:11 would be about six and

one-half months more than three years; the "1335 days" in 12:12 would be about three years and eight months. The historical materials that have been preserved from the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes are insufficient to enable us to know what happened at these particular times, but we can feel confident that those who lived through that crisis would have been able to see exactly what was meant.

The only point at which there is any real similarity between the prediction in verses 10-12 and the one in verse 7 is the alleged agreement between the periods of time that are mentioned, but even this is far from precise. If "time, times and half a time" means three and one-half years, there is a general similarity but hardly an exact correspondence between the periods of time mentioned in the two predictions.

The fact that so many evangelical writers take both predictions as referring to only one of these crises, in spite of the great differences between them, is probably due to a misunderstanding of the question in verse 8. As rendered in the KJV this question reads: "what shall be the end of these things?" If we assume that when Daniel spoke he placed a slight emphasis on the word "these", we can readily understand the question, as it is rendered in the KJV, as asking for information about the other crisis, rather than about the one that had just been discussed. Some of the recent versions (especially the NIV) render the question in such a way as to rule out this interpretation. Thus the NIV renders the second sentence in verse 8 as follows: "So I asked, 'My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?'"

This translation gives the impression that Daniel is asking for more information about the prediction that had just been discussed, and strongly suggests that the prediction in verse 7 and the one in verses 10-11 must point to the same crisis.

There are three points at which the NIV translation of verse 8 introduces ideas that bring confusion to the interpretation of the chapter:

- 1) The insertion of the word "so" at the beginning of the introductory sentence, thus giving the impression that



Daniel is asking for further light on the meaning of the previous answer. Actually the word that the NIV here renders as "so" is merely the common connective *w<sup>e</sup>*, which could just as well be rendered as "and", "then", or even "but".<sup>8</sup>

- 2) The rendering of *aharit* as "outcome." Out of the 61 occurrences of *aharit* in the Hebrew Bible the NIV has rendered it as "outcome" in only two places -- here and in Isaiah 41:22. *Aharit* is a noun based on the preposition *ahar*, which means "after" or "behind," so the noun could be taken either as "latter part" or as "what follows after." The NIV has rendered it as "latter part" in Job 42:12 and Daniel 8:23 (and in each of these places the context shows clearly that this is a correct translation).
- 3) The unwarranted insertion of the word "all," which is not in the verse. Probably the NIV committee intended "all this" to represent the Hebrew word *elleh*, which is usually translated "these" or "those." There are doubtless places where the insertion of "all" might be permissible, perhaps even required by the context of a statement, but that is not the case here.

In Hebrew there is no distinction between "these" and "those." The word *elleh* is usually translated as "these", but every translation renders it as "those" in a substantial number of places. Thus we see that there is no valid philological objection to rendering Daniel's question in Daniel 12:8 in a way that fits the requirements of the context.<sup>9</sup>

In any translation the ideas of the translator are bound to affect the way words and sentences are rendered. A purely word-for-word translation would often be misleading, or might fail to give any reasonable understanding. The makers of the KJV had remarkable success in their effort to avoid inserting their own ideas where there might be ambiguity or uncertainty in the original text.<sup>10</sup>

We noticed that the KJV rendering of Daniel's question

could exactly fit the requirements of the context if we assume that he placed a certain emphasis on the word "these." This brings to attention a seldom recognized factor in writing or translation -- the failure to recognize the difference between written and spoken language."

In verse 13 the messenger again gives consideration to the fate of Daniel, God's faithful prophet, and assures him that neither of these crises will occur during his lifetime. He can continue his activities for a while; then he will go to his rest. At an "end of days" he will rise to receive his allotted inheritance.

### Notes

- ^1 See discussion on pages 22 and 184-187.
- ^2 2 Some take "time of end" as necessarily pointing to the end of the age. Its occurrence in Dan. 11:35, where the context shows that it refers to the end of the persecution by Antiochus, proves that this is not necessarily the case. The word "end" is often used in statements about time, some rather precise, as "at the end of three years," but many very general. As examples of the latter see Gen. 4:3 -- NIV "in the course of time" (Heb. "from an end of days"); 1 Kings 17:7 - - NIV "some time later" (Heb. "from an end of days"); 2 Chron. 18:2 -- NIV "some years later" (Heb. "to an end of years"); Neh. 13:6 -- NIV "some time later" (Heb. "to an end of days"); Jer. 13:6 - -NIV "many days later" (Heb. "from an end of days"); Dan. 11:6 -- NIV "after some years" (Heb. "to an end of years").
- ^3 Keil, p. 486.
- ^4 The NIV translation as a purpose clause may have been influenced by Amos 8:12, where there is a similar statement. There, however, an infinitive is used, while here the tense is an imperfect, a form generally rendered as future. On the partial analogy of Amos 8:12 Montgomery takes 12:4b as describing a search that fails, but few have accepted this interpretation.
- ^5 Young declares that Daniel 12:7 relates to this later crisis, saying: "Since, therefore, the oath is of so extremely solemn a nature, we cannot apply the passage to Antiochus, as does Porphyry. It must, rather, apply to the arch-enemy of the Lord, known as Antichrist. Furthermore, the description does not well fit Antiochus . . . The Antichrist will practically have destroyed God's people, when Antichrist

himself will be destroyed." pp. 259-60.

- ^6 The Apostle Peter tells us that the prophets "searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing" (1 Pet. 1:10-11).
- ^7 Cf. Dan. 2:35,44; 7:27.
- ^8 This particle occurs 39 times in Daniel 12. In that chapter the NIV renders it as "and" 12 times, as "but" 5 times, as "then" once, as "and then" once, as "so" once, and leaves it untranslated 19 times (but inserts "and" at two places where there is no *w<sup>e</sup>* in the Hebrew text). It would be quite proper to render it here as "then" or as "but, and either of these renderings would fit the context far better than "so." This illustrates the fact that everyone who seeks to translate a passage from one language to another has to use a great deal of judgment. Attempts to make a simple word-for-word translation from one language to another are usually misleading, in view of the great differences in language usage.
- ^9 In Matthew 24:15 and Mark 13:14 Christ refers to "the abomination that causes desolation" with reference to events that were then still in the future. Matthew's quotation also includes the words, "spoken through the prophet Daniel". In view of the points mentioned above this fact hardly suffices to prove that Daniel 12:10-12 is a prediction of the time of Antichrist. There is disagreement among New Testament scholars as to whether Jesus was speaking about the Roman war and the destruction of Jerusalem or about the final days of the age. He may have been referring to the difficult prediction in Daniel 9:27 or He may have been using the action of Antiochus as an illustration of something that is still future (see discussion on pp. 208-211). This rather cryptic matter can hardly overturn the strong reasons we have seen for believing that Daniel 12:10-12 points clearly to the crisis caused by Antiochus and not to the crisis discussed in verse 7.
- ^10 The King James Version was the culmination of more than half a century of efforts to find ways to put the thoughts of the Bible into the English language, as spoken by the people of the sixteenth century. Unless there were a similar series of efforts to do the same thing for the twentieth century we can hardly expect as accurate a translation into the language intelligible to the people of our own time. Yet the New International Version, which gathers the thoughts of many minds, is, on the whole, an excellent translation, and is far more useful than a version in a language that no one today can fully understand. The weakest part of the NIV is its translation of the prophetic books. When the editors of the KJV were not sure what

a passage means they simply gave a literal rendering, even if it did not give a clear meaning in English. In such places the NIV often adds words, as in this instance, and thus gives a precise interpretation, which sometimes, as at this place, gives a meaning contradicting the actual meaning of the passage.

- <sup>11</sup> Written language began as a means of making a permanent record of spoken language, but as time went on written and spoken language diverged because there are ways of making thoughts clear in written language that are usually not available in spoken language, and there are very important features of spoken language that are generally unrepresented in written language. It is rare that a writer simply puts down what he would say if he were speaking, for accent and intonation play a great part in what is said. When a written document includes a quotation of spoken words, as in Daniel 12:8, it is necessary to quote these words exactly as they were spoken, even if this would make it difficult to understand their true meaning. Since there is usually no way to indicate intonation and emphasis in a written document it is often necessary, when reading a direct quotation, to infer part of its meaning from the context, and this affects the interpretation of a substantial number of biblical passages.

There is an interesting instance in the account in 1 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 18 of what occurred when the prophet Micaiah stood before Ahab, the wicked king of Israel. Since Ahab desired to convince his visitor, Jehoshaphat, the devout king of Judah, that it was God's will for the armies of the two kingdoms to attack Ramoth-Gilead, Ahab publicly asked Micaiah to say whether this was God's will. Micaiah said: "Attack and be victorious for the LORD will give it into the king's hand" (1 Kings 22:15). Although Micaiah had said exactly what Ahab wanted him to say, Ahab was not satisfied. He did not say to Jehoshaphat: "See, Micaiah agrees with the other prophets that God will give us the victory." Instead he rebuked Micaiah, telling him that he must say nothing but truth in the name of the Lord. Ahab's action makes no sense unless we assume that Micaiah had spoken with an intonation that made it evident to everyone that he was merely saying what the king wanted to hear and did not mean a word of it. When Micaiah responded to the king's rebuke by saying the opposite of what he had said before, the king said to Jehoshaphat: "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?" Recognition of the importance of intonation in spoken language is essential to understanding this incident.

There is a good illustration of the importance of emphasis in quotations from oral speech in Isaiah 28. It is generally agreed that this chapter is an account of what Isaiah said at a banquet given by nobles of Judah to celebrate the expected downfall of Ephraim.

Isaiah was not a welcome guest at the feast, but after he began to speak they let him continue because he was criticizing the Ephraimite nobles and this pleased the leaders of the banquet, who otherwise might have quickly stopped him from talking. For several verses he denounced the drunkenness and pride of the nobles of Ephraim. When he had thus gained the interest of those present, so that it would be difficult for the Judean nobles to stop him, he said: "And these also stagger from wine and reel from beer: Priests and prophets stagger from beer and are befuddled with wine. . . All the tables are covered with vomit and there is not a spot without filth" (vv. 7-8). Scholars agree that the next verse quotes the Judean nobles as they express their irritation. They ask, "Who is it he is trying to teach?" They say he is following his usual type of moralizing and treating them like children. Most readers have to go over verse 7 very carefully before they see what it was that had so upset these men! It is all too easy to take verse 7 as a continuation of Isaiah's criticism of the Ephraimite nobles, instead of realizing that he has turned his attention to the Judean nobles to whom he is speaking. In order properly to bring out the thought we must assume that Isaiah emphasized the word "these." In English we have no way to indicate that "these" is emphasized, except perhaps to underline it or to put it in italics, neither of which is possible in Biblical Hebrew.

In Daniel 12:8 the situation is similar. In reading Daniel's question we may readily assume that he stressed the word "these," so that he was understood to mean: "I haven't altogether understood what you said about those events; now please tell me about these."

## **Epilogue -- Summary of Results The Various Methods of Revelation**

In our examination of the predictive portions of the Book of Daniel, we have observed an interesting progression in the methods by which God revealed His will to Daniel.

In Daniel 2 God enabled Daniel to state correctly the content of the king's dream, and then to tell the king what the dream meant.

Daniel 7 tells how Daniel himself had a dream, thirty-eight years later. In the course of this dream he asked a bystander to explain its meaning, and was given additional information.

In Daniel 8 Daniel had another dream, and God sent the angel Gabriel to tell him what it meant.

In Daniel 9 Daniel prayed one of the great prayers of the Bible, and God responded by sending Gabriel to give him the prophecy of the seventy weeks.

In chapters 10 to 12 a man dressed in linen appeared to Daniel and described future events in plain language.

### **Progressive Revelation**

In these chapters we saw many illustrations of the way God leads His people, step by step, into fuller understanding of the facts He chooses to reveal to them. Thus in chapter 2 He revealed, in bare outline, the fact that four great empires would follow one another, after which the ungodly powers would be completely destroyed and a new and indestructible kingdom would begin to exert universal control.

In chapter 7 He revealed some additional facts about these four kingdoms, presented a thrilling picture of His own dynamic supremacy (vv. 9-10), and gave a further glimpse of events connected with the destruction of the fourth beast and the establishment of the new regime, introducing the figure of the Son of Man and promising that He would associate His saints with Him in His rule.

In chapter 8 God revealed new details about the second and third kingdoms, giving further details about a situation in the course of the third kingdom, and showing the end of the predicted trouble. Chapter 8 contains no suggestion of the coming of the new divine kingdom, since it reaches only to a point in the course of the third kingdom.

Chapter 9 adds an extremely important element -- the divine solution to the problem of sin, promising expiation and laying out a time-sequence, but pointing to severe troubles for those who remain impenitent.

Chapters 11-12 add further details about the course of the third kingdom, give further information about the crisis introduced in chapter 8, and then jump forward to the crisis produced by the antichrist's hatred of God.

### **Fulfilled Prophecy**

In the course of our study we have examined a considerable number of prophecies that have already been fulfilled. This is one of the great values of the study, because it gives evidence of God's ability to predict the future.

In chapters 2 and 7 we saw an outstanding example of predictive prophecy one that goes far beyond any human ability to predict the future. In these chapters God revealed the fact that four great empires would rule successively over most of the then-known world -- a prediction that fits the historical development between Nebuchadnezzar and the coming of Christ. Since the decline of Roman power there has been no empire of comparable magnitude (the so-called British empire was an entirely different type of regime and lasted only a comparatively short time).

Chapter 8 contains amazing pictures of the rapid

conquest by the Persians, of the still more rapid conquest by Alexander, and of the breaking apart of the Greek empire -- striking instances of divine prediction many centuries in advance.

In Daniel 9 there is a clear presentation of the central feature in God's redemptive activity, the death of Christ as the all-sufficient atonement for sin, along with a statement of the approximate time from Cyrus' edict to Messiah's coming. Readers of this chapter could see that exactly seven 'sevens' of years (49 years) had elapsed between God's promise to Jeremiah that Jerusalem would be rebuilt and the edict of Cyrus that gave the Jews permission to return. Then, after a fairly short unspecified interval, there would be a period of 62 'sevens' before the coming of the Messiah. This period of 434 years fits very neatly into the five and a half centuries between Cyrus and Christ. It would not enable a reader to determine the exact time when He would come, but would give a good general figure and provide a remarkable instance of fulfilled prophecy. (We have looked at efforts to find an exact prediction of the precise time of the atonement, and have seen the erroneous ideas involved in these attempts.)

Daniel 11 includes a remarkable prediction of the events connected with the establishment and progress of the Greek kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was divided, with pictures of many of the vital political and military events during a period of more than a century, not given in such detail that one could know ahead of time exactly what would occur, but so described that it could readily be seen, after the events occurred, that they exactly fulfilled the predictions. No other part of the Bible contains so many predictions of political events that have occurred exactly as predicted.

### **Predictions that are yet to be Fulfilled**

While the book contains many prophecies of events that have occurred exactly as predicted, we have seen that a number of verses, including Daniel 2:44, 7:21-22, 26-27, and



11:36-12:2 predict events that have not yet occurred. We have not attempted to make a full determination of the meaning of such verses, which would go beyond our present purpose since it would require careful examination of all related passages in other parts of Scripture, but have briefly examined any suggested interpretations that clearly involve errors of fact or logic.

Having seen so many remarkable evidences of past fulfilment of Daniel's prophecies, we have found reason for certainty that these other predicted events will also occur. Just as the past predictions did not contain enough precise information to enable students to know the full detail of the predicted events, the predictions of the future leave much unsaid. We should avoid going beyond what is clearly stated, but we can be sure that whatever God says in His Word will come to pass.

Certain events stand out. A time is predicted when a great anti-Christian figure will arise and will so severely persecute the people of God that their complete destruction will seem inevitable, but eventually God will destroy the persecutor and will establish a new indestructible regime. There are glimpses of these developments in chapters 7 and 11-12; a few very difficult verses in the last part of chapter 9 may also belong in this area.

### **The Two Crises**

A great part of the purpose of the book of Daniel is to prepare God's people for two great crises -- one to come during the course of the third kingdom, the other near the end of the fourth. These are introduced in reverse order.

In chapter 7 we see the rise of the little horn, its growth in power to the point where it would seem about to accomplish the complete annihilation of God's people, and its destruction solely through the power of God.

In Chapter 8 the earlier crisis is introduced, with its occurrence during the time of the third kingdom clearly indicated. The character and career of this other "little horn" and its temporary success in stopping the divine services are

described in detail. There is here no suggestion of destroying the wicked kingdom but only a promise that the divine services will be reinstated.

Chapters 11-12 again describe the two crises, this time in chronological order, giving considerable historical detail of the events leading up to the earlier crisis, describing it briefly, and then jumping forward to the later crisis, adding new details to the picture in chapter 7. In chapter 12 a question about each of the crises is raised and answered, again in the reverse of the chronological order, ending with the crisis that would face Daniel's people first, not saying that it would be followed by the coming of God's final kingdom, but promising that at its end the divine services that had been stopped would be restored.

God does not wish His people to be caught by surprise, but always to be aware of the fact that He is in complete control. Preparation of God's people to meet these two crises is one of the great purposes of the book, but there is a more pervasive purpose -- to give God's people assurance that He controls all things, that He knows the end from the beginning, and that His people need never despair, since God alone is omnipotent and in the end His supremacy will be apparent to all.



**TIME LINE FOR DANIEL'S PROPHECIES IN  
CHAPTERS 10-12:3**

**THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE SELEUCID AND  
PTOLEMAIC KINGS**

SELEUCID KINGS (Asia Minor and Syria)	BC	PTOLEMAIC KINGS (Egypt)
	323	Death of Alexander
	319	Ptolemy I (Lagos or Soter)
Seleucus I (Nicator)	312	
	283	Ptolemy II (Philadeiphus)
Antiochus I (Soter)	281	
Antiochus II (Theos)	261	
Ant. II divorces Laodice marries Bernice, dau. of Ptolemy II	252	
	247	Ptolemy III (Euergetes)
Seleucus II (Callinicus) son of Ant. II & Laodice	246	
Seleucus III (Soter)	226	
Antiochus III (the Great)	223	
bro. of Seleucus III	221	Ptolemy IV (Philopator)
Antiochus III gives Cleopatra to son of Ptol. IV	205	Ptolemy V (Epiphanes) husband of Cleopatra
Seleucus IV (Philopator)	187	
	181	Ptolemy VI (Philometer)
Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) son of Antiochus III	175	

Antiochus IV dies  Seleucid Empire conquered by the Romans.	169  164	Ptolemy VII (Euergetes II) Ptol.VII & Ptol. VI co-rulers  Ptolemaic Kingdom conquered by the Romans.
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CORRECTIONS OF PRINTING ERRORS

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Dr. Allan A. MacRae, Chancellor of Biblical Theological Seminary in Hatfield, PA, U.S.A., has been a leader, scholar and mentor in theological education during the past sixty years. His training includes having graduated with the A.B. and A.M. from Occidental College in 1922 and 1923 respectively; the Th.B. from Princeton Theological Seminary, 1927; the A.M. from Princeton University, 1927; and the Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, 1937. Among his many other contributions, he has taught on the faculties of Westminster, Faith, and Biblical Theological Seminaries. He now resides with his wife Grace in Quarryville, Pennsylvania.

Here are the fruits of many years of study and research on the *Prophecies of Daniel* by one of the leading American Old Testament scholars of this century. This volume is a welcome addition to the vast amount of literature on Daniel because it provides seasoned and responsible exegesis of passages containing some of the most difficult interpretive problems in the Bible, and it does so in a style that is accessible to lay readers as well as those trained in Biblical studies. This is a book that deserves the attention of all serious students of the Bible.

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