

DANIEL THE PROPHET:

AND

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES.

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PREFACE.



IT is in the hope of promoting the knowledge of dispensational truth that this volume is offered to the Christian reader. It does not claim to be more than a concise and simple introduction to the study of the contents of the book of Daniel; and yet enough of detail has been given to enable the reader, if guided and taught of the Holy Spirit, to comprehend the character of "the times of the Gentiles," of which this portion of the inspired volume especially treats. Symptoms of the period spoken of by our blessed Lord are already to be discerned—"men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." (Luke xxi. 26.) It is therefore of the utmost importance to understand the nature of the last days and the course of events on to the appearing of Christ, as revealed in the infallible word of God. It tends, moreover, to enhance the appreciation of the heavenly calling and of the character of Christianity to be instructed in the purposes which God

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has formed for the blessing of His earthly people. When the heart is at leisure from itself, through being satisfied with Christ, the Holy Ghost is free to lead it out into all the circle of God's interests, whether as regards the church, His ancient people, or the world. May He Himself teach both the reader and the writer how to hold all the truths He has revealed in their proper relationships, and in living power in the soul.

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DANIEL THE PROPHET.



INTRODUCTION.

BEFORE entering upon a consideration of the contents of this book, it is needful to call attention, however briefly, to its special and peculiar character. At the very commencement, mention is made of the fact that Nebuchadnezzar had already besieged Jerusalem, and that the Lord had given Jehoiakim king of Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, etc.; and thereon we read that some of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes, were captives in Babylon. These facts when rightly understood open out to us the significance of the whole book. Until now God's throne had been at Jerusalem; He dwelt between the cherubim; and Israel (we speak of the nation according to the purpose of God) was consequently the centre of God's ways in the government of the whole earth. (See Deut. xxxii. 7-9.) Israel, as this same scripture tells us, occupied a special position of favour and blessing, "for the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." Because of their position of blessing and privilege the nation had special responsibilities. This principle is announced by the prophet: "You only have I known of all the families of

the earth : therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos iii. 2.) Their responsibility was according to their light, and because they were Jehovah's people ; for as such they were His witnesses (Isaiah xliii. 8-13), and Jerusalem was His candlestick in the midst of the nations.

When, therefore, Israel became worse than even the surrounding nations, and the king of Judah made the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen (2 Chron. xxxiii. 9), the Lord, after many warnings and much long-suffering (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14-20), executed the judgment which He had threatened, by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who "burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon." (2 Chron. xxxvi. 19-20.) The dominion of the earth was henceforward committed to the king of Babylon (see Daniel ii. 37, 38), and it is in the midst of this new order of things, as a true remnant and seed preserved of God, that Daniel and his companions are found in the first chapter of our prophet.

This position of the remnant in Babylon, subject to the Gentile power and dominion, affords the key for the interpretation of the book. For the visions, vouchsafed to the kings, concern the Gentile powers themselves, in their successive order, development, and, what may be termed, their moral phases, going on to complete apostasy ; and those granted to the prophet deal with the same subject, but, as going down to the end, in the accomplishment of God's purposes concerning His beloved people, more in their bearing upon this issue. The "pleasant land"

finally becomes the centre round which all the Gentile activities and designs gather; and the curtain is lifted to reveal the future of the chosen nation, in its pathway, because of its sins and iniquities, and most of all because of its crowning sin in the rejection of Messiah, through unequalled and unheard of sorrow and trouble (chap. xii. 1) on to the enjoyment of its purposed blessing according to the thoughts of God.

All this will be more distinctly seen as we pursue our studies; but it may now be pointed out that the book is divided into two equal parts—chaps. i. to vi. forming the first, and chaps. vii. to xii. the second part. The first part is wholly made up of the visions and actings of the Gentile monarchs and their subordinate authorities. Daniel and his companions appear on the scene as having the mind of God, and as faithful to Him amid all the seduction and opposition by which they were surrounded. Daniel, like Joseph in Egypt, is first brought to the notice of the king as an interpreter of dreams; and also, like Joseph, he is, as a consequence, taken into favour, and exalted to the seat of government. Having obtained from the king the association of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, with himself in his exaltation, they become the objects of the envy and enmity of the princes. The details will be found in their place; but the two things are interwoven, the character of the Gentile powers, and the suffering condition of the remnant and their final deliverance from under the Gentile persecuting dominion. The second part of the book, commencing with chapter vii., contains the prophetic visions, with their interpretations, received by Daniel; and they embrace the course, character, and destiny of the Gentile empires, which followed the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

Their various actings are described, especially those of the third and fourth, in relation to the Holy Land and the Jewish people; and we have, moreover, the special revelation made to Daniel of the seventy weeks, as indicative of the period in which God's purposes for His earthly people will be accomplished.

Finally, in the long vista of the future opened up to the prophet, the Gentile governments are displaced by the Son of man to whom there is given "dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Chap. vii. 14.) It is in connection with His coming to establish His kingdom that Daniel is told: "At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Chapter xii. 1.) At His first coming He was cut off (ix. 26), and had nothing; but though He was rejected and crucified by "His own" people, He yet, according to the counsels of God, died for that nation; and it is on the foundation of that efficacious sacrifice that God, after He has, in His righteous government, punished them for their sins, will act in the future for the restoration of His beloved, but guilty, people. Isaiah can thus cry, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." (Chap. xl. 1, 2.) The book of Daniel reaches in prophetic vision to this point; but it does not go beyond. For the establishment and the glory of the kingdom other prophets must be consulted. What we have in Daniel is, as we have already

indicated, the course and character of the Gentile powers, from the destruction of Jerusalem on to the appearing of Christ, together with the position of the remnant, and the sufferings of the Jewish people, while the Gentiles possess the dominion, until at last God, in His faithfulness in pursuance of His purposes, interposes, and, for His own glory, works for the rescue and blessing of His elect earthly people. This blessed consummation is yet future, and though our calling and portion are heavenly, and our hope is the coming of the Lord to receive us unto Himself, and to introduce us into the Father's house, it is yet of the utmost importance that we should understand the nature of "the times of the Gentiles," and embrace in our thoughts the whole circle of God's revealed interests. It is to aid in this object that we desire to commend to our readers the earnest study of this part of the inspired volume.

CHAPTER I.

WHATEVER the state of things on the earth God never leaves Himself without a witness. He may punish His people on account of their unfaithfulness and their sins, and He may permit them to be carried into captivity, and to be enslaved under the power of their enemies, and yet, in the midst of the darkness by which they are surrounded, He will rekindle the torch of His truth, in testimony to Himself and to His faithfulness, and as encouragement to those who cleave or turn to Him in their sorrows. He will, moreover, cause those whom He has used to chastise His people to know that they are still the objects of His care and love; and that their oppressors, however seemingly exalted and mighty, are subject and accountable to Him.

The first three verses of our chapter are the introduction to the book, and they explain how it had come to pass that Daniel and his companions are found in connection with the court of the king of Babylon. The reference, as may be easily seen by turning to the historical accounts in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, is to the first siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. In Chronicles, after the mention of the accession of Jehoiakim to the throne, through the instrumentality of Necho, king of Egypt, it says, "Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his

temple at Babylon." (2 Chron. xxxvi. 6, 7.) But neither here, nor in Kings, is it mentioned that there were other captives at this time, and it is quite possible that the short introductory statement of our chapter includes, in its purport, the subsequent proceedings of the king of Babylon until Jerusalem was destroyed, and the princes, and the mighty men of valour, together with the mass of the people, had been deported to Babylon. (See 2 Kings xxiv. 12-16, xxv. 1-21.) It is therefore the general position which is here defined. The Lord had given Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, and so completely had He abandoned His house in Jerusalem, that He had permitted the sacred vessels of the temple, profaned as they were by the sins of the kings of Judah, to be carried into the land of Shinar,* to the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god. God's candlestick at Jerusalem was thus for the time removed; and it was judicially removed, because it had ceased to give forth divine light for guidance and blessing amid the moral darkness of this world.

In the next paragraph (*vv.* 3-7) the remnant, or its representation, is introduced. After that Hezekiah had received the embassy from the king of Babylon, and, gratified by the attention thus shown to him, had exhibited to them all the treasures of his kingdom, Isaiah was sent to him with this message: "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon. . . . And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they

* For the significance of this statement the reader should consult Zechariah v.

shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." (Isaiah xxxix. 5-7.) The opening verses of our chapter reveal the fulfilment of Isaiah's prediction; but what we desire to call attention to is, that, in fulfilling His own word in judgment, God remembered mercy, for it is out of these very descendants of Hezekiah that He raised up witnesses for Himself in the midst of Babylon's idolatrous corruptions.

In permitting Nebuchadnezzar to carry them away as captives, God was accomplishing His own purpose; but Nebuchadnezzar, having obtained power over them, sought to make them serve his will. The consequence was, that a conflict immediately arose between the thoughts of God and the thoughts of the king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar desired to adorn his palace with those of his captives "in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." (v. 4.) The world is ever ready to make the people of God its servants, and to derive light from their knowledge; but it cannot tolerate them, if they maintain fidelity to their God in obedience to His word, and in a holy separation from evil. The king, therefore, would have these captives to be fed with his own meat, and to drink of his own wine, that, nourished from his resources for three years, they might at the end thereof stand in his presence. (v. 5.) He would have them, in one word, to cease being Jews, and to become Chaldeans; and to mingle with their new religion the light they had received from the oracles of God. Such is the origin of philosophy even in Christian times—that philosophy, against which Paul earnestly

warns us as being "after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. ii. 8.)

It is in connection with this command of Nebuchadnezzar that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are brought into prominence (*v.* 6.) Their very names, when understood, proclaimed to whom they belonged,* and the character of their God: and the prince of the eunuchs, instinctively feeling that such names would not suit his master's court, gave them others, all of which were more or less connected with Babylon's idols. (*v.* 7.)

The question now raised for Daniel and his companions was, whether for the sake of the world's favour and advancement, they would yield to the king's command. The answer had already been given: "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." (*v.* 8.) As a Jew, obedient to the word of God, it was impossible for Daniel to eat the food of the Gentiles. Both the fat and the blood of those animals which were permitted to be eaten, were forbidden; and it was only of the clean beasts and birds that a Jew was allowed to partake. (See Leviticus vii. 22-27, chaps. xi. xxii.) Unless, therefore, Daniel and his companions were prepared to surrender their faith, and to renounce the word of their God, they could not accept the royal provision. And there is another instruction—if an application may be made to ourselves. The food of the world, that in which man as man, alienated from God as he is, finds his strength and sustenance, is ever destructive

* Daniel means "God's judge"; Hananiah, "whom Jehovah graciously gave"; Mishael, "who (is) as God"; and Azariah, "whom Jehovah aids."

to the spiritual life of the Christian; and if he would be a true Nazarite, and walk in the path of holy separation unto God, he must ever turn aside from the wine, the joys, of earth. The apostle thus writes, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." (Ephes. v. 18.) In the attitude of Daniel we have then an example for all believers; and the closer it is followed, the more will they enjoy the conscious favour and blessing of God; and, as morally dead to things here, they will the more fully realize their true portion in Christ, in the place where He is.

We now read, as explanatory of what follows, that "God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs." (v. 9.) Again we are reminded of the similar case of Joseph. Sold into Egypt, and becoming an inmate of Potiphar's house, "he found grace" in his master's sight. But, like Daniel, refusing the world's food and wine, he, unlike Daniel, was cast into prison, where the Lord also "gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison." "When a man's ways please the Lord, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him"; and hence it was that the prince of the eunuchs, notwithstanding his fear of his lord the king, and the possible danger to his own life, granted through Melzar the request of Daniel, that he and his companions might be tested for ten days with pulse to eat and water to drink, instead of the king's food and wine. God was with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and hence it was that, at the end of the ten days, "their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." (v. 15.) God had sustained and prospered His servants in their path of fidelity to His will, in keeping themselves

undefiled amid the Babylonish seductions and corruptions by which they were surrounded. Even Melzar could not gainsay that they had flourished on their simple regimen, and henceforward he gave them pulse.

The reflection may be permitted, that there are many of the people of God who can walk in the narrow path of devoted discipleship as long as they are in the enjoyment of the fellowship of saints, and in the midst of happy spiritual influences. But it is sometimes seen that such, when transported into a worldly circle, are apt to fall in with the practices and habits of their new society, and thus to lose their distinctness of walk, even if their testimony be not altogether extinguished. It is therefore full of refreshment and encouragement to ponder the spectacle presented by these four children of Judah. Deprived of all the privileges of the temple, the temple itself destroyed, themselves captives at the mercy of a heathen monarch, plied, too, with every sort of alluring temptation, they maintained the Nazarite's place of true separation through obedience to the word of God. Doubtless it was the faith and energy of Daniel that acted on his companions, and led them to follow him in the path of God's will; but if so, the others were willing to follow, and all four present a striking proof of the all-sufficiency of God's grace to sustain His servants in the most unfavourable circumstances that could possibly be imagined.

The significant statement follows: "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." (*v.* 17.) "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant." This principle ever abides; and it is seen in

all dispensations. It is first laid down by God Himself in the familiar words, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him." (Genesis xviii. 17-19.) It appears also in the prayer of the apostle Paul for the Colossians, "That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." (Col. i. 9.) It is abundantly plain, in other words, that God gave these four "children" knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom because of their separation in heart and life from the defiling evils around. It is indeed ever true, that the nearer we are practically to the Lord, the more fully He communicates to us of His mind; and remark, that it is not only what is generally understood as "His mind," but it is in all learning and wisdom. The students of modern days, even Christian students, are too often betrayed into the thought, that for the acquisition of human "learning and wisdom" they are dependent upon their own industry and power. The consequence is, that the years of their student-life are often marked by spiritual declension, if not by open backsliding. The example of the four "children" might well teach another lesson.*

At the close of the verse Daniel is singled out from his fellows; for we are told, undoubtedly in view of his special work and mission, that he had understanding in all visions and dreams. Thereby, too, we are taught, that

* The well-known saying of Luther, although he referred to the Scriptures, might be profitably recalled in this connection, "To have prayed well is to study well."

in all the circumstances and experiences through which God leads His people, He is forming them as vessels for His service. On the human side it was a calamity that had befallen Daniel; on God's side, as is plainly revealed, this seeming calamity was but the instrumentality which He had chosen to form Daniel for his mission to carry His testimony into the court of the mighty Gentile monarch—His testimony concerning the powers which He had allowed to supersede His own direct government of the earth through Israel, and through Jerusalem as His dwelling-place and throne. But it is faith alone that can rise up beyond all secondary causes, connect everything with the hand of God, and at the same time peacefully rest in Him, assured of His infinite wisdom and love, and that the issue of all events will be according to His own perfect will.

The next three verses (18–20) give the result before the king of the training to which the four children, as well as the others selected, had been subjected. All alike were brought into the royal presence, and Nebuchadnezzar himself examined the students of his college: he “communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.” (*vv.* 19, 20.) They might each have thus adopted the language of the Psalmist: “Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts.”

(Psalm cxix. 98-100.) Would that the lesson might be laid to heart by all the young Christians of the present day!

The chapter closes with the remark, that "Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus." He lived, therefore, to see the fall of the colossal empire of which Nebuchadnezzar was the monarch; he served under Darius the Mede, and witnessed the advent of Cyrus, of whom Isaiah had prophesied more than one hundred and fifty years before (see Isaiah xlv. 28; xlv. 1-3, etc.) as the one who should be instrumental in the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple. It should, however, be observed that this last verse is only a general statement that Daniel lived to see the accession of Cyrus; for in chapter x. 1 we find that he received special revelations from God "in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia." How far he may have survived that date is not mentioned; but the one given makes it certain that he lived to a good old age, exceeding, at any rate, the limits of threescore years and ten.

CHAPTER II.

IT is evident that the real subject of the first part of this book commences with this chapter. Chapter i. is prefatory and introductory, giving, so to speak, the situation, and displaying a view of the various actors in the following events, together with their relative positions, while behind all God is clearly revealed as working all things after the counsel of His own will. However supreme man may seem to be, as, for instance, Nebuchadnezzar in his dominion, it is always to be remembered that God never surrenders the reins of government. He may control directly or indirectly, but He does control the smallest as well as the greatest events that happen on the earth. It was thus by no chance that Nebuchadnezzar "dreamed dreams" in the second year of his reign, "wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him." (*v.* 1.) The like thing had happened, it will be recalled, to Pharaoh, and it was used to bring Joseph to the notice and succour of the king, and to be the means, in God's hand, of constituting him ruler over all the land of Egypt; and he thus became no mean type of the rejection and exaltation of Christ in His earthly glory. In a similar way the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar were the occasion for the introduction of Daniel to the king, and of his exaltation as ruler over the whole province of Babylon.

But man must ever come to the end of his own resources before he is made willing to turn to God for

aid and direction. The king had ascertained for himself that in all matters of wisdom and understanding the "four children" were ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm; and yet he did not in his perplexity turn to them for help and counsel. For we read, "Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king." All the wise men of his realm, men of knowledge and experience, all the philosophers and scientists of the day, were thus assembled to listen to the commands of Nebuchadnezzar. The king's request was simple: he had forgotten his dream, and he desired them to tell him what it was that he had dreamed, and then to give its interpretation. Pity might be felt for these men of wisdom, in being subjected to such an ordeal, did we not remember that the professors of the occult sciences of that day claimed to be able to reveal secrets, and to penetrate into regions hidden from mortal eyes; and, secondly, that the whole thing was designed of God to bring to nought, in the eyes of this absolute monarch, the wisdom of the wise, to take them in their own craftiness, and thus to pour contempt upon all the pride of man. Their reply was, "Tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation."

An interpretation might easily be given, one which, if it concerned future events, might pass unchallenged, for until the time came for it to be realised no one could say whether it was true or false. The purpose of God, therefore, to expose the vanity of their pretended skill and knowledge, would not then have been accomplished. The king would not be pacified by their answer; and,

on being further urged by alternate promises of reward and threatenings, they were driven to confess, "There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." (*vv.* 10, 11.)

The issue raised was thus decided, and the wise men themselves were compelled, in no dubious language, to own their incompetency to reveal the king's secret, and to declare at the same time that the knowledge required of them lay outside the domain of man altogether, that the "gods" alone possessed it. On the side of man the answer was not so unreasonable; but Nebuchadnezzar, absolute and imperious monarch as he was, would not suffer the contradiction of his wishes; and, enraged, he commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. "And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain." (*v.* 13.)

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Daniel had not been summoned with the astrologers before the king; but, being included in the public reckoning among the "wise men," he was amenable to the king's decree. This brought him into notice, and into contact with the officer charged with its execution. It was God's purpose to bring His witness, in the person of Daniel, before Nebuchadnezzar; and the king's forgetfulness of his dream, and his anger at the failure of his wise men to tell him what it was, were only the instrumentalities for its accomplishment.

On learning from Arioch the cause of the king's anger,

and of the decree that had gone forth, "Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation." (*v.* 16.) What, it may be enquired, led Daniel to suppose that this secret would be communicated to him? The answer is, Confidence in God, and the assurance that, as His glory was concerned in the matter, as well as the safety of those who had, through His grace, maintained their faith and hope in Him amid all the seductions of the Babylonian court, He would not fail to interpose for their rescue in this hour of peril. It was, in truth, a supreme moment—a moment when all the wisdom of the world had confessed its failure. If, therefore, Daniel could reveal the king's secret, God would be publicly magnified before the whole realm.

Daniel's next step was to go to his house, and make "the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." (*vv.* 17, 18.) Counting upon God, Daniel associated his companions with himself in his supplications. It is the first instance of united prayer recorded in scripture; and the fact that these children of the captivity resorted to it, discovers to us the secret of their holy and separate walk. Dependence on God in secret is the means of all power in life and testimony, and, it may be added, of courage in the presence of man and of Satan's power. These four, on their knees at such a moment before the God of heaven, present a wondrous spectacle. They were but aliens in a strange land, expatriated for the sins of their nation; and now they were doomed to a speedy death, unless the forgotten

dream could be recalled and interpreted. But they knew with whom they had to do, the One who had said in their own Scriptures, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalm l. 15); and hence they waited and pleaded before Him "concerning this secret." Nor was their confidence in vain: God heard their cry, and the secret was revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. (*v.* 19.)

It will be remarked that they pray to the God of *heaven*. In Israel He was known as the Lord of all the earth (Exodus viii. 22; Joshua iii. 11; 2 Kings v. 15); for indeed He dwelt, and had His throne, in the midst of His people. But now it was otherwise; for He had removed His throne from Jerusalem, and committed the sovereignty of the earth to Nebuchadnezzar (*vv.* 37, 38); and hence it was with a true understanding of their own position in relation to God, that the "four children" addressed Him as the God of heaven. The time will come when He will once more resume the title of the God of the earth, and it is His claims as such that will form the subject of testimony on the part of the two witnesses in the book of Revelation.*

The heart of Daniel was filled with thanksgiving at the revelation to him of the king's secret; and the character of his piety, the state of his soul, is seen in that he turned immediately to God with thanksgiving and praise. When blessings are communicated there is often a tendency to fall at once to their enjoyment instead of tracing them back, as Daniel did, to the heart of God. Verse 19 gives the general fact of his having blessed God; and then we have, in *vv.* 20-23, the exact words in which his thanksgiving was rendered. First, he ascribes blessing to the

* The true reading in Rev. xi. 4 is "the *Lord* of the earth."

name of God for ever and ever. The praise he offers he desires to be eternal, "from eternity to eternity," as the due of Him who had been pleased to reveal Himself to His people. He then assigns a reason—"Wisdom and might are His." A simple utterance, but how profound! For if wisdom and might are God's (compare Rev. v. 12), they are nowhere else to be found, and it is in vain to turn for them to any but God. Next, he ascribes to God universal sovereignty. "He changeth the times and the seasons: He removeth kings, and setteth up kings." The potentates of the earth may claim to exercise absolute power; and men by the force of arms, or even by political movements, may depose monarchs and establish governments; but neither the power nor the wisdom is theirs—they are but the blind instruments of the divine will. Once recognize with Daniel the sovereignty of God, and, whatever the character of the times in which we live, or the menacing aspect of public affairs, we may rest in perfect peace, knowing, as Nebuchadnezzar had to confess, that God "doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." (Chap. iv. 35.) Moreover, Daniel says, "He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." This principle is everywhere affirmed, that there must be a state of soul to receive from God. The apostle thus prayed, that the Colossians might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. In like manner we learn from these words of Daniel, that to be divinely wise, wise after God's thoughts (and the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom), is the condition of receiving wisdom. To him that hath shall be given, and this is what Daniel confesses, whether in respect of wisdom or understanding.

He therefore proceeds, "He revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with Him"; for He is a God of omniscience, and all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. (See Ps. cxxxix.) After this celebration of what God is, in His wisdom, power, and sovereignty, Daniel offers his thanksgivings for the special mercy he had received. And in doing so he passes from the address, "God of heaven," to the more intimate title, "God of my fathers"; for the God his fathers had known, and who had succoured them out of their distresses, is the One who had appeared on his own behalf, and he thanks and praises Him accordingly, and as the One who had now given him "wisdom and might." It is beautiful to notice, lastly, how he associates his companions with himself. "Thou," he says, "hast made known unto me now what *we* desired of Thee: for Thou hast now made known unto *us* the king's matter." Together they had sought the help of their God; and Daniel in full identification with his brethren acknowledges that the answer they had received was God's response to their united cry.

At once "Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation." (v. 24.) Arioch complied "in haste" with Daniel's request; and "the king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?" The answer of Daniel is given in three parts; first, his explanation of the source and the object of the

revelation of the secret; secondly, the dream itself; and lastly its interpretation. Daniel commences, in evident communion with the mind of God, by declaring the impotence of human wisdom, in accordance with the words of another prophet, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Writing thus, as led of the Holy Spirit, the sentence of death upon the wisdom of the world, Daniel proceeds to declare the source of the vision. "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets," and this was Daniel's God, and he delighted to exalt Him in the presence of this absolute and idolatrous king. He then announces the object of the dream in respect of Nebuchadnezzar; it was to make known to him what should be in the latter days. (*vv.* 28, 29.) Finally, he disclaims any merit for himself; he was nothing but the vessel of the forgotten dream. God had His people in view, the faithful remnant to which Daniel belonged, in revealing the dream; and He also purposed that the king should know the thoughts of his heart. Daniel thus kept himself in the background—a sure sign of his moral preparedness to bear testimony for God. The nearer we are to God, the more we lose sight of ourselves, and the better we are able to apprehend and to communicate His mind.

After Daniel had explained to the king the source and object of the revelation of his secret, he proceeded to recall the dream and to give the interpretation. The language he employed in describing the dream was as simple as it was grand. "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible." (*v.* 31.) The details will come before us

in considering the interpretation; but it may be remarked at once that while the image represents the times of the Gentiles, from Nebuchadnezzar's day until the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, it is yet one image, and that the image of a man. It is thus, as has been strikingly observed by another, a representation of "the man of the earth" (see Psalm x. 18), and the man of the earth, it may be added, as expressed in government—in all the various phases, as will afterwards be seen, of his corrupt heart and unbridled will. Man is never, indeed, fully revealed until all restraints are removed and he has the liberty as well as the inclination to gratify his own lusts. (See 2 Thess. ii. 6–12.) The image, while a complete image, is yet divided, as to its composition, into four parts: the head of fine gold; his breast and arms of silver; his belly and his thighs of brass; and his legs of iron; his feet part of iron and part of clay. There is, therefore, deterioration from the head to the feet, as seen in the figurative employment of the different metals. Finally, the image was smitten by a stone "cut out without hands," and all its several parts were "broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." (*vv.* 34, 35.)

Such was the dream; and the prophet's authentic interpretation follows. The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar. (*v.* 38.) Of all the kingdoms that are to span the interval between the destruction of Jerusalem, and the period of the establishment of the everlasting dominion of the Son of man, that of Babylon is pre-eminent. The reason is here given. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was a

direct gift from God. As Daniel said, "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." This could not be said of any of the three successive kingdoms. They come upon the scene in a providential manner, as permitted of God, for the government of the earth, and according to His ordering; but their respective heads were in no sense the direct depositaries of power, as was Nebuchadnezzar. He was nearest God in this external sense, and his responsibility was consequently all the greater.

The character of his kingdom, as described by Daniel, was remarkable. Nebuchadnezzar was a king of kings—the supreme monarch, by God's appointment, over all the kings of the earth, for God had given him "a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory"—all of which were wonderful words as setting forth the majesty and excellency of his position and dominion. Nor was his authority confined to men; for "wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all." (v. 38.) A comparison has sometimes been drawn between the place occupied by Adam as head of this creation, and that here given to the king of Babylon; and it has been well said: "Although more limited, it is a dominion characterized by the same features as that of Adam. It differs in that men are placed under his power; it is more limited, for the sea is not included in his sovereignty, but it reaches to every place where the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven exist."* Taking these various features into consideration, it is easily comprehended

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, by J. N. Darby, vol. ii., p. 415. New edition.

that Nebuchadnezzar should be set forth as the head of gold.*

The next two kingdoms, as denoted by the silver and the brass, are passed over with the slightest mention in the interpretation ; but in another part of the book they are plainly stated to be the Medo-Persian and Grecian kingdoms. (Chapter viii. 20, 21.) The fourth kingdom is described more at large ; and happily there is no difficulty in its identification, as all prophetic expositors agree that it is that of Rome—the four kingdoms being Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome ; and these, as will be seen, are to occupy the whole period of the times of the Gentiles.

The features of the fourth kingdom, as delineated by Daniel, must be briefly considered. Before this is done, however, its duration must be indicated. It continues plainly until the kingdom of Christ is established (*v.* 44) ; and hence, to understand this, other scriptures have to be consulted. Historically, the Roman empire succeeded that of Greece, and, “strong as iron,” it broke in pieces and subdued all things. Its might for the time seemed to be irresistible, and it established its dominion throughout the greater part of the then known world. All this is matter of history ; but the question arises, If this Roman empire is to be found in existence on the eve of the appearing of Christ, where is it now, and whence is it again to emerge into view ? It is in the book of Revelation that the answer to this question is found. That the outward form of this kingdom has disappeared is only too apparent ; to human eyes it is, in fact, non-existent. In God’s eyes it

* It must be observed that it is not only Nebuchadnezzar personally that is figured by the head of gold, for the successors of his own line until Belshazzar are included.

is but hidden for the moment, and waiting to spring forth and to astonish the world by its reappearance. The angel thus said to John, in interpreting the "mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. . . . The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition." (Rev. xvii. 7-11.) And more precisely still. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." (v. 8.) Two things are taught in these scriptures—firstly, that the "beast" is regarded as the continuation of that which formerly existed; and, secondly, that "while of the seven," he reappears after an interval of apparent non-existence. Now this "beast" represents the head of the revived Roman empire in the last days; and his origin and characteristics, as well as the source of his throne and authority, are depicted in Rev. xiii. 1-8; and if verse 2 in this scripture be compared with Daniel vii. 3-6, it will also be seen that this beast is the successor of the three previous kingdoms, and that as such he combines all their moral features, as portrayed under the symbols of the leopard, the lion, and the bear.

The fourth kingdom therefore, the kingdom in power when our blessed Lord was here on the earth, and by whose authority, in the person of Pilate, He was adjudged to be crucified, is that which will once more be established,

and which will continue until smitten by the stone "cut out without hands."

In verses 41-43 Daniel calls attention to a source of weakness in what was otherwise as "strong as iron": "And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." We see no reason to doubt a very common interpretation of the clay, that it represents the mingling of popular, democratic forms with absolute government, the combination of absolutism with the popular will, which, as they are incongruous elements, can never be thoroughly welded together, and must, in the very attempt at union, become a source of weakness.

A further idea is given in verse 43, and is thus explained by another: "'The seed of men' is, I think, something outside of that which characterises the proper strength of the kingdom. . . . It appears to me that the Barbaric or Teutonic element is probably here pointed out as added to that which originally constituted the Roman empire."*

That the ten toes are also symbolical may be gathered

* Those who desire to pursue the historical investigation of this statement will find ample accounts of the effect of the irruption of the Goths into Italy, and of the capture of the imperial city, in GIBBON'S *Roman Empire*, and other works.

from chapter vii., and also from Revelation xvii.; but as they are not explained here the subject may be left until chapter vii. is reached, merely remarking that they set forth the ten kingdoms which, federated together under one imperial head, represent the final form of the Roman empire.

It will now be understood that, under this image, the various forms of the world-power are sketched from the days of Nebuchadnezzar down to the time when the Lord will come, take His sovereignty over the whole earth, and reign for ever and ever. The chart of this world's history, onward to the close, thus lies open before the eye of God. Men may agitate, devise, form and overturn governments, as they think, in their own power, and according to their own will; but prophecy teaches that they can only act within the limits of the divine will for the accomplishment of what has been purposed. We see, moreover, that human governments, whatever the efforts of sincere, though misguided men, must deteriorate until at length, as we are distinctly told in the Apocalypse, Satan will be the source and sustainer of the last form of earthly rule. It is well for us, therefore, when, as taught of the Spirit of God, we survey the future, to seek grace to maintain the place of separation outside of all the alarms and confusions of the world, while waiting for the Lord's return.

Passing now to verse 44, we learn that "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever"; and this is given, as Daniel expressly says, as the explanation of the stone, cut out of the

mountain without hands, smiting the image upon his feet, and breaking them to pieces. The expression, "in the days of these kings," is to be noted, especially as following on verse 43, as giving the fact, elsewhere formally stated, that the last kingdom of the four will be subdivided into ten kingdoms; and this also marks the time when the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will displace, first destroy and then displace, the last form of the Roman empire. This kingdom set up from heaven is the kingdom of Christ (see Daniel vii. 1-14); and its first act will be to break the "image" in pieces, and then, when formally established in power by Christ Himself, it will enlarge itself, until it fills the whole earth; and it will have no successor, for it will stand for ever.

In concluding his interpretation, Daniel added two things—first, he repeated that the great God had made known to the king what should come to pass hereafter; and, secondly, he assures the king of the certainty both of the dream and of its interpretation. As befitted a divine messenger, he was confident of the truth of his message. It is precisely in this particular that a revelation from God differs from what is of man. All that is outside of the Bible, all that presumes to come into competition with it, and challenges the ears of men, is but a sea, an unformed mass, of opinions and reasonings. How welcome therefore to the soul, wearied in its quest after some stable foundation on which to rest in view of death and eternity, is the immutable basis laid for faith in the infallible Scriptures. Daniel's message concerned time alone (although it reached onward to the close of all God's ways in government on the earth); but knowing the source whence it came, he could

authoritatively announce that what he had spoken would be surely fulfilled.

And Nebuchadnezzar, idolator though he was, acknowledged, was constrained to acknowledge, the power of the word. He "fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret." (*vv.* 46, 47.) There was no escape for the king from this conclusion. He only had the dream, and having had it, he only could test Daniel's claim for God to reveal secrets; and hence, when his secret was revealed, the conclusion was irresistible that Daniel's God was above all gods. The confession indeed was remarkable, admitting as it did the supremacy of God in heaven and on earth, and also what amounted to His omniscience. Far, however, as it went, neither Nebuchadnezzar's conscience nor heart appears to have been reached. It was but the bowing of his mind to the evidence offered, just as those in the days of our Lord who believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did. (*John ii. 23.*) His action, in yielding homage to Daniel and in commanding an oblation to be offered to him, as well as his subsequent conduct, is the proof of this; even though for the moment he proclaimed in the presence of his court the sovereignty of Daniel's God in heaven and on earth.

Lastly, Nebuchadnezzar "made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon." (*v.* 48.) Like Pharaoh, the king felt that "a man in whom the Spirit of God" was

(Genesis xli. 38), would be a valuable assistant in government; and he consequently promoted him to great honour. Daniel had neither sought nor asked anything for himself; but now that he was exalted, he "requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king."

In such a way, when the sentence of death had gone forth against them, did God rescue His servants, and, working out His own purposes in testimony and blessing, bring them forth in the full light of the day. They were of the captivity of Judah; but now they are made to occupy the most prominent places in Babylon, for the king exalted them above all his courtiers and nobles in the direction of public affairs, while Daniel himself was in a still higher position, for he "sat in the gate of the king."

CHAPTER III.

IN chapter ii. the image which Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his night-dreams shadowed out, according to Daniel's authoritative interpretation, the whole course of the times of the Gentiles. It is therefore a general picture, but a picture so distinct in its outline, that no one who gives himself earnestly to study the subject can possibly mistake its import. He that runs may read the character of the kingdoms that bridge the space between the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar and the appearing of Christ in glory. After this general outline, our attention is called, by the Spirit of God, to what may be termed the moral characteristics of the Gentile powers, chiefly as displayed in Babylon; but, though displayed there, the several features are typical or representative of what will be seen throughout the whole duration of the Gentile sovereignty. In other words, we are now permitted to see the use which the Gentiles will make of the power entrusted to them in responsibility. This is abruptly brought before us in the opening verse of this chapter: "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was three-score cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon." (*v.* 1.)

Such is man. Nebuchadnezzar had learnt from Daniel, if he had not known before, that the God of heaven had given him his universal kingdom, and he had confessed that Daniel's God was "a God of gods and a Lord of

kings," and yet he will use his absolute power to have a god of his own, to assert his own will over the consciences of his subjects throughout his vast dominions, and thus to usurp for himself the place and authority that belonged alone to the God of heaven. That is, he used the power that God gave him to deny God and to put himself in the place of God, although this feature is subsequently expressed in a still more distinct form.

Such conduct would be wholly inexplicable were we not acquainted with the subtle motives that animate and govern the human heart, and did we not remember that we ourselves have often used the blessings vouchsafed of God for our own profit and exaltation. In truth, Nebuchadnezzar might have had strong inducements to the course delineated in this chapter. His empire must have been an immense conglomerate, composed of numberless tongues (see *vv.* 4–8) and religions, all of which would tend, politically speaking, to disturb the peace of his realm.* If, therefore, his heterogeneous dominions could be welded together by a common religion, his empire would be consolidated and the welfare of his subjects promoted. Whatever his thoughts, such was the course he adopted, and he made the magnificent image which he determined should serve as the deity for "all the people, the nations, and the languages" that were subject to his authority.†

The image erected, all the governing authorities and officials of his realm were summoned to Babylon, to be

* The difficulties in the government of India, springing up from the difference of religion, will afford an illustration of this.

† It has often been suggested that the image of his dreams formed the pattern for his idol. It is certainly remarkable that the one followed so closely upon the other, and that, as the head of the one that symbolised his own kingdom was of gold, he should make his idol of gold. There

present at "the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up"; and they were all obedient to the royal command. Assembled "before the image," the decree was proclaimed by an herald—"To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." (*vv.* 4-6.)

The decree would be easily understood: it was simple and brief, and the penalty was plain. Nor was there much, according to human thoughts, required. An act of prostration before the king's idol at the appointed moment, and the whole thing was over. But the decree needs a little examination. It was, as before observed, the intrusion of man's will into God's domain. Obedience to the powers that be, as may be hereafter more fully explained, is a sacred duty; but obedience to the powers that be can only be rendered within the circle of their own lawful authority. If they step out of this circle, as the rulers in Jerusalem did when they commanded the apostles not to teach or to preach in the name of Jesus, they must be told, as Peter and John answered, "We must obey God rather than men." Absolute monarch, therefore, as Nebuchadnezzar was, he stepped outside of his own domain, and claimed for himself what was due to God alone, when he issued his decree.

might have been a connection in his mind between the two, but the wonder is, as already seen, that the impressions made upon his mind by the revelation of his secret, and by the interpretation Daniel gave him, could have been so soon effaced. We all know, however, how transient the deepest feelings are where there is no positive work of the Holy Ghost in the soul.

Another thing may be remarked. The signal for the worship of the image was the outburst of all kinds of music from the finest band in all the king's dominions. If religious feelings did not exist, they must be produced by the sweet and sensuous sounds of harmony. How subtle the wiles of Satan! for we have really here the history of all religious music. It appeals to nature, and begets natural emotions; but in these the Spirit of God has no part, for they that worship God—"must worship Him in spirit and in truth." All these expedients do but deceive souls by their enjoyment of what is natural, and at the same time they both shut out God and conceal the spiritual condition of the professed worshippers.

There was practically entire unanimity in obedience to the king's command. Three only, as far as is recorded, refused to comply with his decree. These were brought to the notice of the king by certain Chaldeans, who "came near, and accused the Jews." (*v.* 8.) After reciting the king's decree, with the accompanying penalty for disobedience, they proceeded: "There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (*v.* 12.) If the accusation was subtle, and couched in the form most likely to arouse the anger of the king, its motive is very apparent. Jealousy is written plainly upon it. "There are certain Jews"—men of an alien race, belonging to a hostile nation, of those who were brought here as captives, and those whom thou hast promoted over the heads of thine own loyal subjects—it is these who have set themselves up in opposition to thy royal command. Hatred is scarcely less concealed, for,

before charging them with refusing to worship the king's image, they say, "They serve not thy gods." The king knew this well from Daniel, and had, notwithstanding, appointed them to their posts of honour; but the Chaldeans could not brook the servants of the true God being thus exalted, and the opportunity had at length arrived for them to express the enmity of their hearts in the accusation they now made. Happy was it for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego that no charge could be brought against them excepting, as afterwards in the case of Daniel, concerning the law of their God.

If, however, the manner of the accusation was dictated by jealousy and hatred, it was well calculated to appeal to the conscience of Nebuchadnezzar. The mention of his promotion of the three Jews would, it might be supposed, surely recall to the king's mind that eventful day when Daniel had unfolded his secret and its meaning, together with the confession which Daniel's words had extorted from his lips. But if so, all was forgotten in his "rage and fury" at the men who had dared to disregard his absolute and imperious will. The knowledge which God had communicated to Daniel had, in a certain sense, ministered to the king's desire, whereas now, faithfulness to God crossed his will, and taught him that there were some who believed, and who acted on their belief, that God was, to use the king's own words, "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings." This was insufferable to the insensate and irritated monarch, and he commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego should be brought. "Then they brought these men before the king." (v. 13.)

Morally speaking, it was a most impressive scene. On the one hand there was Nebuchadnezzar, the mightiest

monarch the world had ever seen, surrounded with all the pomp and magnificence of his court and realm; and on the other, three men of a despised race, whatever the position they occupied at that moment in the government. And the question about to be raised was this: Who is the master of men's consciences, God or man? Nebuchadnezzar himself raised it. First, he asked them if the accusation were true; and it will be observed that he travels outside his own decree in accepting the additional charge—that they did not serve the king's gods—which the Chaldeans had brought. Next, he gives them a further opportunity of proving their loyalty when the band of music should once more break out in exciting strains. If then "ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." (v. 15.) Lastly, carried beyond all bounds by his rage, he dared to challenge the interposition of anyone superior to himself, and thereby to assert his own omnipotence; for he added, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" This was in truth a gage of battle, and the conflict now commenced was between Nebuchadnezzar and God.

The answer of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, quiet and subdued in tone, is sublime in the confidence in God and in His power which it breathes, and in the calm courage it expresses in their determination to dare all and to endure all rather than be unfaithful to their God. They say, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.* If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not,

* Some translate, "It is not necessary to answer thee on this subject."

be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (*vv.* 16-18.) As wisdom, divine wisdom, was found to be with the remnant in the previous chapter, so now faithfulness, indomitable faithfulness, to God is exhibited. Grace gave to them both the one and the other, for it was God who had taken up His servants to display, through them, His own wisdom and power.

But this answer of the three children of Judah to Nebuchadnezzar must be examined to understand its full import. First, then, they declared that they were not careful, or that it was not necessary, to reply to the king in "this matter," meaning, undoubtedly, that as the king had defied God, it was He alone who could deal with him, and that they fully counted on His interposition to rebuke his arrogant and profane presumption, and to vindicate His own name and supremacy. They then proceeded calmly to confess their faith in the power of their God to deliver them should Nebuchadnezzar carry out his threat of casting them into the furnace, and their confidence that He would deliver them out of his hand. They added, moreover, that should He not deliver them, their determination was fixed not to yield to the king's command. They knew whom they had believed, and that He was able to preserve them from the king's fury; but if it were His will, they were ready to die as martyrs for His name's sake. As another has observed, their faith and obedience were as absolute as the will of the king.

This attitude of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego defines with exactitude, as already remarked, the true position of the believer in relation to the powers that be. Everywhere in the New Testament submission to these is enjoined, and such is to be the path of the Christian in

the midst of political agitations and confusions. He is neither to raise questions, nor to examine the lawfulness of constituted authorities. It is enough for him that they are in power, and he pursues his way in peace as he renders the required obedience. But if these authorities, whether they be emperors, kings, or magistrates, travel outside of their own province, as Nebuchadnezzar did, and seek to substitute their will for the word of God, and to impose that will on the consciences of their subjects—putting themselves, in fact, in the place of God—then, in very faithfulness to God, like these three children of the captivity, and at whatever cost, the believer is bound to disobey. The limit of his obedience to kings is obedience to God in obeying them. The moment he is called upon to disobey God by yielding to a monarch's demands, he must, if he would retain a good conscience towards God, refuse the demanded subjection, even at the cost of life. Such was the ground taken in this conflict between Nebuchadnezzar and these three subjects of his realm.

This was a new thing to this master of the world. Absolute in authority over all the kingdoms of the earth, was he to be flatly and publicly disobeyed by three Jews—members of a nation which he had conquered? Such a thing could not for one moment be tolerated; and hence he was “full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego”; and “he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace.”

A public example must be made of these rebels to the king's commands, and a salutary impression produced on all

the representatives of the government. In some measure, one can understand the wrath of this arbitrary monarch. He had devised an expedient for securing the unity of the various races of his dominions, and it seemed likely to be successful. Not a hand nor a foot was moved against the project, when suddenly three Jews, and these the special objects of the king's favour, were brought before him and charged with resisting his commands.* His entire scheme was thus imperilled, and hence the ungovernable passion with which he ordered the rebels to his authority to the cruellest doom that could possibly be devised.

His commands were instantly obeyed, and "because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego." What was human life to this wilful, raging king? But God will teach him by the very contrast, that what is death to His enemies cannot injure those who are under His protection. (Compare Exodus xiv.; Mark xvi. 18.) "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace"—and, their confidence in God vindicated, they were not destroyed. The men who had cast them into the furnace were overpowered and killed by the scorching flames; but they themselves though in the midst of the furnace were unharmed. Their God *was* able to deliver them. There was another thing to fill the mind of the king with astonishment. He "rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They

* Many speculations have been offered upon the fact of Daniel's absence from this scene. That he did not surrender his faith, that he was as faithful as his companions, is attested by his subsequent history. Why he does not appear in this chapter is not revealed.

answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (*vv.* 24, 25.) Two miracles thus amazed the king: the fact of his intended victims being loose and unhurt, and the presence with them of a supernatural Companion, whom he designates as "like the Son of God."* Not that he understood his own speech; but we may conclude that the Spirit of God, as often in the Scriptures, controlled him, and made him proclaim the truth. Isaiah had said, speaking in the name of Jehovah to Israel, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; . . . when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (*chap.* xliii. 2); and this promise was now fulfilled to this believing remnant, as it will be to the remnant of a future day, of which these three children are a type. Jehovah was with His faithful servants in the furnace to sustain, to comfort, and to secure them from harm. Before the very eyes of the king, who had impotently and impiously dared Him to deliver out of his hand, He appears, and shielding His servants from the power of the flames, vindicates their confidence in Him, and their fidelity to His name. Has He not also said to us, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me"? (*Hebrews* xiii. 5, 6.)

Nebuchadnezzar had provoked the conflict in challenging the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

* Whether the translation be accepted as it stands, or taken as "Son of the gods," the significance remains. He owns that some one, more than mortal, is with them in the furnace.

God came in, and silently exhibited His power before the furious king; and he is conquered! Forgetful of everything else now but the spectacle before his eyes, insensible even to his own public humiliation, he, confessing his defeat, with his whole mien and aspect changed, advanced "to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came forth of the midst of the fire." (v. 26.)

It is to be remarked that it is not said that anyone besides Nebuchadnezzar saw the divine Companion of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. His eyes were for the moment opened to see what was naturally invisible, that he might learn his own folly in entering upon a conflict with the God of heaven. What patience and longsuffering on the part of God, in the presence of the weak profanity of one of His own creatures! Happy is it for man, for us all, that He never allows His purposes to be frustrated by our daring presumption and rebellion.

The king's command was now obeyed, and these "servants of the most high God" came forth; and the truth of their preservation—the miracle wrought—was verified by "the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors," who were "gathered together," it would seem, to examine the reality of this miraculous preservation; and they "saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them." (v. 27.) The deliverance was total and complete, for the fire had only been allowed to burn the bonds wherewith they had been

bound: at least they were seen, notwithstanding they had been bound, walking in liberty in the company of their Deliverer and Preserver. Overwhelmed by the undeniable character of the evidence offered, and owning his own impotence and defeat before such a God, Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God." (*v.* 28.) He thus paid honour to God, who had rescued His servants from the king's wrath, and he justified those who, in fidelity to "their own God," had refused to worship the image which he himself had set up. He made a decree, moreover, "That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." (*v.* 29.)

All the king's thoughts and projects were thus utterly set at nought. The image he had made had been publicly refused, and as publicly declared to be a false god. Nebuchadnezzar himself was constrained to confess the impotence of himself and of his god, and to proclaim throughout his empire that there was no god like the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. His magnificent assembly had been in vain as far as his own purposes were concerned. Obsequious subjects came from all parts of his dominions to accept and to worship the king's idol: and lo! even before they dispersed, a trumpet-tongued testimony was raised to the supremacy of the most High God. God vindicated His own name, and the faith of His servants, before all the notabilities of the realm.

One thing more is recorded: "Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon." (v. 30.) The victory vouchsafed was complete; for not only did God frustrate the designs of the king, but also those of the jealous and malignant enemies of His servants. They had thought to compass the destruction of these faithful men; but the issue was their further promotion and exaltation.

So far the record is historical; but is it only historical? To suppose so would be to miss the main object of the narrative. The actual facts took place, but these actual facts were chosen to set forth what will take place in the last days. As the first Gentile empire became idolatrous so will also the last, as we may learn from Rev. xiii., and as God's faithful remnant was the object of enmity and persecution under the king of Babylon, so will it be again under the last head of the Roman empire. (See Rev. xii. 13-17; xiii. 6-8, 15, etc.) But, as we read in this same book, Daniel's people, however hot the furnace into which they shall at that time be cast, "shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Satan may be allowed to rage, and to sift the people of God, but not a hair of their heads can fall without God's permission. The history therefore of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego is full of encouragement—especially for the Jewish remnant in the last days, but also for the saints of God in every age when surrounded by the fires of persecution, when Satan, as a roaring lion, is seeking whom he may devour. And the lesson is written large: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.)

CHAPTER IV.

A SPECIAL character attaches to this chapter from the fact that it contains a communication or letter, written by Nebuchadnezzar himself, and addressed to "all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth." He had been favoured with many signs from God through Daniel's interpretation of his dream in chapter ii., and in connection with the deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the power of the flames in chapter iii., and, under the momentary impressions produced, he had confessed Daniel's God to be a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a Revealer of secrets, and that there was no god that could deliver as the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. His heart, however, was unchanged; but in the narrative before us, which again is both historical and prophetic, we are permitted to see the way in which this idolatrous king is brought at last to "praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven." (*v.* 37.) Read in its connection, there cannot be a doubt that Nebuchadnezzar really bowed in conscience and heart to the testimony which reached him through the prophet Daniel, and that he thus became a servant of the "Most High."

The proof of this lies in the royal communication to all his subjects. He desires that every person in his dominions should be made acquainted with his "conversion." The address of the letter has already been noticed; and this is followed by a salutation—"Peace be multiplied unto you"—which in its form is almost apostolic.

(Compare 1 Peter i. 2.) In verses 2, 3 he concisely states the object he has in addressing his subjects: "I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me"; and then his heart overflows in admiration as he recalls what God had wrought, exclaiming, "How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation." It is a good thing when the soul is constrained to confess what God has wrought by His grace; for, as the apostle teaches, if the heart believes unto righteousness, it is with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. It is due to God that confession should be made, and when made it turns to a testimony for His glory.

Following upon this, he gives his own personal circumstances at the time when this new message from God reached him. "I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace." (*v.* 4.) He had attained the summit of all human ambition. Monarch of all the kingdoms of the earth, his authority undisputed, prosperous in all his undertakings, with nothing to disturb his tranquillity, whether as touching his public or his private affairs; he was in peace* in his house, and flourishing in his palace. Everything, in a word, went well with this mighty monarch, so that he might have been, if human prosperity could have given it, in the enjoyment of perfect happiness. And he was, it would seem, happy, but without God. It was from this clear sky, with no premonition of coming trouble, that God's warnings suddenly came to arouse the king and to

* Such is the translation given by some; and this removes perhaps the ambiguity of the words "at rest," as in connection with his dream and visions they might be thought to mean that he was resting in sleep.

fill him with apprehensions. "I saw a dream," he says, "which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me." (v. 5.)

The dream did not, as on a former occasion, pass away from his mind; nor did he understand what he had seen, although he was troubled—troubled as he felt that it contained something of momentous import for him and for his kingdom. He therefore at once issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to him the interpretation of the dream. (v. 6.) Having proved their incompetency in chapter ii., and having, at the same time, learned that Daniel alone could unravel his mystery, it may seem strange that Daniel was not immediately summoned into the king's presence. There is no affinity between the natural and the spiritual man. Saul was glad to avail himself of David's services both with his harp and with his sword, and yet he hated him. In like manner, Nebuchadnezzar had profited by Daniel's interpretation; but he could not love the one who was the representative before him of the God of heaven. If, therefore, he could do without Daniel, he would; and consequently he first tried his own wise men. Again their impotence was manifested. The wisdom of man is confined to earth; but Nebuchadnezzar's dream came from heaven. The subject was one outside of all the thoughts of men, even though it related to the earth. To understand God's things a man must be instructed of God; and this the wise men of Babylon were not. Foiled in his purpose, the king tells us, "At the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god," etc. (v. 8.) The next verse plainly shows that Nebuchadnezzar had not forgotten Daniel's ability as an expounder of secrets,

although he could not have known the source of his inspiration, nor that he was God's vessel of the spirit of prophecy. He only sent for him, therefore, from necessity, inasmuch as in all his dominions there was no other who could interpret his dream.

Every particular of the dream was fast rooted in the king's memory, and he proceeded to repeat it to Daniel. It falls into three parts; first, its subject-matter, the tree (*vv.* 10-12); secondly, the judgment upon the tree (*vv.* 13-16); and lastly, the object of the judgment executed (*v.* 17). As all these particulars are taken up by Daniel, we may pass to his interpretation, after noticing, first, the effect on Daniel of the king's recital.

When Nebuchadnezzar had explained to him what he had seen in the visions of his head in his bed (*v.* 10), "Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him." The meaning of the dream was unfolded to his soul as he heard it, and as he comprehended its import in its application to the king, filled with amazement, and troubled, he was reluctant, it would appear, to communicate to him the significance of the dream. This was perceived by Nebuchadnezzar, and he said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies." (*v.* 19.) It may be questioned whether Daniel, in speaking thus, having received from God the interpretation of the dream, maintained the level of his prophetic office as a messenger from God; and it will be observed that in the record of this sentence the name Daniel is dropped. It is for the first and only time Belteshazzar—"not Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar," but simply Belteshazzar—who answered the king.

However this may be, Daniel commenced to give to the king the interpretation of his dream: "The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth." (*vv.* 20-22.) The figure of a tree to denote men in their earthly greatness is often used in the prophets. Ezekiel thus says: "Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs. . . . All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations," etc. (Chap. xxxi. 3-9.) This striking correspondence helps much to understand the symbology of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, and enables us to perceive how apt an illustration it is of exaltation in the government of the earth, in the far-reaching, wide-spreading, and sheltering protection it affords to all ranks and conditions of men. The beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven are introduced because both alike had been given into his hand (see chap. ii. 38); and hence they, as well as the children of men, are looked upon as subject to, sustained and protected by, his authority. Well therefore might Daniel say to the king, "Thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth."

A difference between the head of gold in chapter ii., and

the tree here, in their respective applications, is to be remarked. Both concern Nebuchadnezzar, as plainly said; but the former includes his dynasty, inasmuch as it is not until his dynasty ends that the second of the four prophetic kingdoms appears. The latter is a symbol of Nebuchadnezzar himself, as is seen by the judgment executed; only, it has to be added, that his degradation is in reality, as may be afterwards explained, typical of the character of the Gentile power in government on to its supersession at the appearing of Christ to establish His kingdom.

Having given the application of the symbol, Daniel continued his interpretation: "And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule." (*vv.* 23-26.)

Nothing could be more precise than this interpretation, and it is given at length that the reader may perceive

how exact in every detail was the fulfilment. It could not be otherwise, inasmuch as it was, through Daniel, a divine exposition of Nebuchadnezzar's vision. It may now be understood why Daniel was tempted, as the judgment impending over the king rose up before him, to say, "The dream be to them that hate thee." It was only the courage which the sense of his mission from God imparted that enabled him thus fearlessly to unroll the scroll of the king's future; and it needed courage for the Jewish captive-prophet to stand before the monarch of the world, and to depict such an overwhelming disaster. Daniel himself would appear to have been moved; for he appealed to the king in words of earnest entreaty, "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." Like Paul with Felix, Daniel reasoned with Nebuchadnezzar of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come; but we do not read that the king trembled. The message however had been delivered, and the appeal made; and the momentous interview between the prophet and the monarch was ended.

In the next place the history of the fulfilment of Daniel's interpretation is given. "All this," he says, "came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar" (*v.* 28); and then we have the circumstances under which the threatened judgment was executed. Twelve months had passed, and there is no record that the king had even been troubled by the warning he had received. The sky was still clear, with not a cloud on the distant horizon. This might be a matter of unspeakable surprise if we did not remember that the spectacle of sinners unmoved on the eve of eternal woe greets our eyes every day. Death must come,

and judgment will follow, and yet men are careless and heedless. So with Nebuchadnezzar; and hence it is that we read that "at the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon." And what was the subject of his meditations? His own greatness, power, and majesty. "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (v. 30.) All this was the glorification of himself, the full-blown pride of the human heart, begotten of his exaltation and prosperity—the pride that goeth before destruction. The source of his power had been communicated to him (chap. ii.); but this he had entirely forgotten in attributing all the glory of his kingdom to himself. Surveying the magnificence of his palace and metropolis, with a heart swelling with pride and exultation, he ascribed all to the might of his own power, and declared that it was all for the honour of his own majesty. God was not in all his thoughts, nor even his own false gods; his vision was bounded by himself—himself as the source of all his glory, and himself as the object of all his works. What an insight into the heart of man! We are thus allowed to behold the moral condition of this gigantic tree before it is hewn down according to the divine decree.

The similarity between this and the parable of the rich man, whose ground brought forth plentifully, will at once be recalled. As he congratulated himself upon his prosperity, purposed to enlarge his barns, and contemplated years of selfish enjoyment, the judgment went forth, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." (Luke xii. 16–20.) In like manner, as Nebuchadnezzar vented the pride of his heart in his foolish boasting,

even "while the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee"; and then the judgment pronounced by Daniel is repeated by the voice, and immediately executed. For "the same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." When God speaks it is done, and what He commands ever stands fast.

It is now necessary to enquire into the meaning of this judgment; and on examination it will be found that it has a threefold significance—personal, moral, and prophetic. First, then, the *personal* meaning has to be considered. This lies in the fact that what was inflicted upon Nebuchadnezzar was a direct judgment from God for his personal pride, for what might be termed his self-deification. The pride of man is one of the especial objects of God's hatred; and because of its expression in an extreme form in the king of Babylon, he fell under God's judicial hand. There are those who endeavour to account for his condition in a natural way by terming it a special form of madness. Even so, the question returns, Whence came it? The Biblical narrative supplies the answer—an answer recorded by the king himself—that it came from the hand of God as a just judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar's overweening pride and vain-glory. Threatened a year before it was inflicted, and space thus having been given for repentance, he has the very words of Daniel recalled to his mind by a voice from heaven, at the very moment when the punitive stroke was about to descend. Entrusted with the government of the earth,

God held him accountable, and punished him accordingly, and yet in grace, as well as in righteousness, since the object was to teach him "that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." (v. 32.)

The *moral* significance of what befell Nebuchadnezzar is even, if possible, of more importance. He was driven from men, became as a beast of the earth, for he ate grass as oxen, and in his bodily condition was even worse than the beasts of the field. All this is but expressive of his moral state, and of the character of the power he wielded as dissociated from God. In the language of another: "Power is reduced to the condition of the beasts that know not God, and are devoid of man's understanding. The only true privilege of man, that which ennobles him, is that he can look up to God and acknowledge Him. Without this he looks downward, he cannot suffice to himself, he is degraded. . . . Pride and independence separate man from God; he becomes a beast, devoid of real intelligence." The physical state of this monarch is therefore a moral picture, and one that should often be pondered, inasmuch as it reveals man's condition according to the estimate of God, when he vaunts his own power, seeks his own glory, and asserts his own independence. But it goes further than the king himself; it embraces also the character of his rule, and of his kingdom. If then the first kingdom in man's hand becomes in chapter iii. idolatrous, in chapter iv. it becomes bestial, bestial in the sense of being devoid of all intelligence as dissevered from God, and as looking downward, and feeding only upon the motives and objects of earth. For when man in his exaltation shuts out God from his thoughts, and makes himself his centre and object, he is

morally no better than a beast. As the Psalmist says, "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." (Psalm xlix. 20.)

There is lastly the *prophetical* aspect. "Seven times" were to pass over the king in his degradation before he should be restored. It does not say "years," though possibly the "times" might be "years," but "times." The expression is vague, while the term "seven" gives it a very precise meaning; that is, a perfect period, a period comprising the whole duration of the times of the Gentiles. We gather, therefore, that all the four kingdoms—and these, it will be remembered, embrace the whole period of Gentile rule—will have the same moral character before God; that the power exercised in them will be apart from God, and will be wielded for self, for man, and for earthly objects, without regard to God's thoughts, or to responsibility to Him from whom the power has been derived. This is a very solemn consideration, and on many accounts. It shows that no improvement in the governments of the earth is to be expected, and therefore that it is worse than useless, to say nothing of inconsistency with his heavenly calling, for the Christian to embark upon the sea of political agitations, in the hope of securing some amelioration in the state of things around. It is not for one moment denied that man's condition in this world may be improved by just and beneficent laws; but the question remains, Will any political changes or legislative enactments alter the moral character either of human governments or of their subjects? Our chapter, with a host of other scriptures, proclaims that the character of the first kingdom will be repeated in its successors; and it will, as we know from the book of Revelation, be seen without

any disguise in the final form of the last of the four prophetic kingdoms. If any one should doubt this statement, let him trace the course of human governments from the days of the kingdom of Babylon up to the present time. Let him wade through the histories of conquests, wars, and dynasties, and then let him ask himself if he could name any period when the power of the throne was held from God, and wielded for God. He will undoubtedly discover that some individual monarchs have been pious men; but he will also have to confess that, whatever their piety, they could not change the course or the character of their governments. The powers that be are ordained of God, and therefore the Christian is to render them all due honour and subjection; but this in no wise militates against the fact that Nebuchadnezzar's condition in its moral aspect, as given in our chapter, depicts the character of the kingdoms which fill up the times of the Gentiles.

Having traced the meanings of Nebuchadnezzar's degradation, we may now consider its effect on himself. The "seven times" may also refer to this effect. The period was divinely appointed, and, as in analogous cases in the typical books, had without doubt regard to the change to be wrought in his soul. His degradation, in other words, was to continue for a perfect period, as indicated by the number seven, until the divinely-intended work in his soul should be accomplished. Hence he says, "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants

of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (*vv.* 34, 35.) The object of God's dealings with him was attained; for the king had now learnt the lesson appointed him, that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. (See verses 25, 32.)

Let us, however, examine his confession more particularly. In the judgment with which he had been visited he was as a beast of the earth; and, as we have pointed out, the characteristic of a beast is that it looks downward, and does not possess the intelligence of man. It is, therefore, most interesting to notice that the moment Nebuchadnezzar lifted up his eyes to heaven his understanding returned. So with the prodigal who had wandered into the far country; his "coming to himself" and his turning to his father's house are connected. The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom, and this statement is illustrated in the experience of the king of Babylon. Turning upward to the hand that had smitten him, he began to understand, for he learnt for the first time his accountability to God.

And remark that the first use he makes of his newly-found understanding is to bless the most High, to praise and honour Him as the eternal God, and as the Sovereign Ruler both in heaven and on earth. This is exceedingly beautiful; and is the sure evidence of what we know as a work of grace in the soul. The character under which he blesses God, "the most High," is also significant. This title is first found in connection with Melchizedek, who is termed the priest of the most High God; and who, blessing Abram on his return from the slaughter of the

kings, said, "Blessed be Abram of the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth." (Genesis xiv. 18, 19.) This plainly teaches, as also may be gathered from other scriptures, that this is the title which God will assume in the age to come, when He will, in very deed, possess the earth as well as heaven. In addition, therefore, to the significance of the use of the title by Nebuchadnezzar, who owned thereby that God, though He had committed the sovereignty of the earth to him, yet did according to His will on earth as in heaven, there is also a prophetic meaning. We have already called attention to the fact that Nebuchadnezzar's degradation shadowed forth the character of Gentile rule on to the end; and now we learn that it will be through judgment that the nations will be brought to acknowledge God. We thus read in the prophet Zephaniah, "My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent." (Chapter iii. 8, 9.)

Daniel had told the king that the kingdom should be sure unto him; after that he had learnt that the heavens do rule. This prediction was also verified; for he further adds: "At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me." (v. 36.) God thus fulfilled His own word by the mouth of His servant; not one jot or tittle was allowed to fall to the ground; and Nebuchadnezzar joyfully confesses

and records the divine faithfulness. And it is no small encouragement in the presence of the pride of power everywhere displayed, and amid all the confusions of earth, to see that God is working through all for the accomplishment of His own purposes, and that in the issue all the Gentiles, as well as His ancient people, will be brought into willing subjection to Christ when He establishes His kingdom, and extends His sway throughout the whole earth.

The chapter closes with another note of praise: "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase." (*v.* 37.) Comparing the Nebuchadnezzar who renders this praise to God with the Nebuchadnezzar who said, as he surveyed the magnificence of his city, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" etc., we can only exclaim, "What hath God wrought?" He had indeed shewn His power to abase the one who was walking in pride; and, more than this, in abasing him He so effectually changed the heart of the monarch that he turned submissively to the hand that had smitten him, and confessed that all God's works are truth, and His ways judgment. He thus justified God, a sure and unmistakable sign of conversion, and as he justified Him his lips were filled with praise and adoration. It is a lovely picture of the ways of God both in judgment and in grace.

A word should be added upon the character in which he here confesses God. He now speaks of Him as the King of heaven; and this is also evidence of his having been divinely taught. When Jehovah had His throne in Jerusalem, He was God of the earth as well as of

heaven; but when He had abandoned His throne there, and had committed the sovereignty of the world to the Gentile monarch, He would be known as the God of heaven, and it is to Him as such that Daniel bore testimony before the king. (Chap. ii. 37-44.) But while God had now assumed this title, He in no wise surrendered either His claims to the earth, or the present actings of His power in government; for His object in the judicial stroke that fell upon Nebuchadnezzar was, as we have seen, to teach him, "that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Nebuchadnezzar had confessed this truth; but ere he concludes the account of God's dealings with himself he proceeds a step further, and owns Him as the King of heaven.

It is exceedingly interesting to trace the various stages in Nebuchadnezzar's history which led up to this conclusion. In chapter ii. he confessed to Daniel, "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret"; in chapter iii. he decreed that no one, under the extreme penalties of the law, should speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, owning that there was no other god that could "deliver after this sort"; and, lastly, in our chapter he acknowledges God as the most High, and as the King of heaven. God thus in His mercy subdued the proud heart of this mighty potentate, and humbling him before Him, made him confess His name before all the inhabitants of his vast empire. If a record of judgment, it is yet a story of unbounded grace.

CHAPTER V.

IT is of all importance to remind ourselves again and again, in reading the chapters that form the first part of this book, that while they are strictly historical they are also prophetic; that while they describe characteristics of the thrones of the Gentiles, to which God entrusted the sovereignty of the earth after the destruction of Jerusalem, these characteristics will reappear in the last days. There are three things, indeed, which especially have this prophetic character: the acts of these various monarchs; the judgments that followed as in the last, and in the present, chapter; and the deliverance of God's people as seen in chapter iii., and again in the person of Daniel, in chapter vi. To these may be added the acknowledgment of the true God by the Gentiles after their having been judged, as portrayed in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, and also in that of Darius (chap. vi.), albeit his confession is elicited rather by the display of God's power in succouring His people, as represented by Daniel, when in the very jaws of destruction.

Coming now to our chapter, a still worse moral feature of Gentile sovereignty is exhibited. Idolatry and pride of power—vainglory—had marked Nebuchadnezzar; but Belshazzar is distinguished by the public insolence of daring impiety, venting itself in open wickedness and profanity. The occasion for this outburst of iniquity is described in the first verse: "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine

before the thousand." It was a night of feasting, revelry, and unbridled license, when all the evil passions of man's corrupt heart were inflamed and enticed to their gratification. For, mark, it was while Belshazzar "tasted the wine," that he gave the commandment "to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar* had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein." (v. 2.)

Was he intoxicated? With the pride of wicked presumption certainly; and this was inflamed by the wine which he drank. Indulgence in wine, in the joy which earth affords, necessarily panders to the heart's worst desires; and the company that surrounded the king reveals that this instance was no exception to the general rule. Had this been, however, but an ordinary revel or debauch, whatever its accompanying licentiousness, no inspired pen would have recorded it; but the crowning sin of it was the direct insult which Belshazzar offered to the God of Israel, the God of heaven. The holy vessels were holy still in God's eyes, however polluted they had been by the sins of His kings and priests, for they had been used in the house where He had put His name for ever, and where His eyes and His heart should be perpetually. (1 Kings ix. 3.) True He had in judgment suffered them to share in the captivity of His people; but

* The chronology of Nebuchadnezzar's successors cannot be accurately determined, but it seems beyond question that Belshazzar could not have been his son. It is possible that he might have been his grandson, though this is not certain. The term "father," therefore, as is often the case in Scripture, is used in the sense of progenitor, or forefather. Whatever the exact relationship he bore to Nebuchadnezzar, he could not have been very far removed from that monarch, seeing that he was well acquainted with the judgment that had fallen upon him. (v. 22.)

He could not allow them, consistently with all that He was, and with all that He purposed, to be defiled by the Gentile monarch and his profligate associates. Nor was it only that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them; but "they drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." Gods of all degrees were extolled, and their superiority over the God of Israel insultingly vaunted; and in so doing they challenged God publicly and insolently. With such insensate folly and impiety did this fool-hardy king dare the interposition of the living and true God.

The answer—for it could not be delayed—was at hand; almost before the sounds of their idolatrous chants had died away—"in the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." (*v.* 5.) Silently came these mysterious fingers in answer to the king's challenge, silently they wrote their words of doom amid the noise of revelry and of song, and yet, for an unseen power directed his eyes, the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. And what was the effect of the apparition? Surely fortified by wine, and strong in confidence in the omnipotence of his gods, the king will not be afraid? But even he—wicked as he was—had a conscience, and he knew of the power that had driven even Nebuchadnezzar from his throne, and made him, for a season, like the beasts of the earth; and conscience now, spite of the king's surroundings, asserted its office, and "the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." (*v.* 6.) What a change! In

the midst of his banquet he had dared to insult the God of heaven, and now, at the sight of this mysterious hand, fear and dread possessed his soul, and he trembled from head to foot. He had girded himself to challenge the omnipotent God; and the moment the challenge was accepted, before the blow had been struck, his heart failed him under the awful apprehension of coming judgment. Who can help him at such a moment? Instead of humbling himself before the One against whom he had so grievously sinned, he called to his succour the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers, and by the proffer of munificent rewards hoped they might be able to solve the written words, and thus, as he vainly thought, give him relief. But the wisdom of this world could not unravel God's secrets nor interpret His writing; and these men of pretended knowledge were as impotent as they had been proved to be in the days of Nebuchadnezzar. "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

Belshazzar was still more troubled, panic-stricken as he had been, and even his courtiers were astonished. But God meant that the king should have the writing explained, only it must be done by His own chosen vessel. The instrument was at hand to bring Daniel to Belshazzar's notice. "The queen* by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house." (*v.* 10.) She had not taken part in the wild orgies of this eventful night; but the rumour of the apparition that had startled the king and his guests had gone out through the palace and reached her ears. She was fully acquainted with what had taken place

* This could scarcely have been Belshazzar's wife (see *v.* 3); most probably therefore it was the queen-mother, or, as expressed in modern language, the queen-dowager.

in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, as also with the service Daniel had rendered, and with the place to which he had been consequently appointed, and she hastened therefore to the king's help. "O king," she said, "live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed: there is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods"; and then, after describing what he had proved himself to be in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, she added, "Let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation." (*vv.* 10-12.)

Daniel was at once "brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?" He had known, as before remarked, of the services of Daniel, but he had not cared to know him personally. The impious king had no desire for acquaintance with the servant of God; and had only now sent for him in his extremity for help in the hour of his need. He then told Daniel what he had heard of him, and continued: "Now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom." (*vv.* 14-16.)

Daniel was standing before the sovereign of all the kingdoms of the earth, before an absolute monarch, and before one who held the power of life and death over all his subjects (see *v.* 19); but Daniel was the servant of the God, who was the source of Belshazzar's brief power; and he, therefore, conscious of his mission, neither feared the king nor was tempted by his offered rewards. In the calm confidence which, through grace, he possessed in Him whose servant he was, he "answered and said before

the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation." (v. 17.) It was a noble preface, befitting the messenger of God to the wicked king; and the reader will not fail to remark the different spirit in which Daniel addressed Belshazzar from that in which he spoke to Nebuchadnezzar. The latter was idolatrous, imperious, and had sought to compel his subjects to worship the idol which he had made; but he had not gone the length of Belshazzar in his profanity. Daniel therefore made a distinction, taught as he undoubtedly was by the Spirit of God, and knowing that the cup of Belshazzar's iniquity was now filled up to the brim. But he will deliver his message, though, first of all, Belshazzar must be made to hear how God had dealt with Nebuchadnezzar in the past, and how that, absolute monarch as he was, and universal as was his dominion, "when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him." Daniel recounted, moreover, the nature of the judgment that was inflicted upon him, and reminded Belshazzar that all this was "till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appointeth over it whomsoever He will." Thereon he proceeded to deal with the trembling monarch before him—in severe, but faithful words: "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood,

and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." (*vv.* 22, 23.)

If God was about to smite, He will have the grounds of His action explained. It is indeed a striking feature in His ways, especially as recorded in the Old Testament, that before He acts in judgment, He is careful to state the reasons of it, that He may be clear when He speaks, and justified when He judges (See, for example, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 11-21.) So here Daniel presented the indictment against the king, showed him that he had slighted all the warnings of the past, had sinned against light and knowledge, and that he had finally lifted up himself against the Lord of heaven, and had polluted the holy vessels of His house. This shows plainly the meaning of the king's action in commanding these vessels to be brought; that it was no mere wild freak, while under the heat of wine, but a deliberate and studied insult against God. Hence it was that Daniel would have the king to understand, that "the part of the hand" was sent from God to write on the wall in connection with this very act. (*v.* 24.) In such a solemn moment there must be no mistake, and thus he arraigned the king before the tribunal of God before he expounded the writing.*

The words were four: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN, and we have next Daniel's authoritative interpretation.

Before entering upon it, attention may be drawn to the fact that Daniel does not merely translate the words

* As the writing was in the Chaldaic language, it was not that the king's wise men did not understand the words. It was the connection, application, and interpretation that they could not unfold. So many separate words would appear to them, being without the clue, as disjointed and meaningless.

which had been written, but he gives out the mind of God intended to be conveyed. This could not have been done unless he himself had received a direct communication from God. The words themselves, if rendered according to their meaning, are "numbered," "weighed," and "divided"; but no human ingenuity could have discovered their divine significance, and it is this which Daniel explains. The first word was repeated. The reason for this may be doubtless found in Joseph's words to Pharaoh: "And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." (Genesis xli. 32.)

"This," says Daniel, "is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it." (v. 26.) In expounding Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great image, Daniel had said to him, "Thou art this head of gold," and, inasmuch as Babylon was to be succeeded by the Medo-Persian kingdom, it is evident, as previously remarked, that Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty was included in this term, Belshazzar being its last member. God Himself had committed the sovereignty of the earth to Nebuchadnezzar in responsibility, and He alone determined the duration of his kingdom. When therefore Daniel said to Belshazzar, "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it," he meant that, according to the divine appointment, the termination of Babylon's sovereignty had arrived; that its days were numbered, and were now ended.

The ground of this annunciation is found in the next verse: "TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." (v. 27.) If God had committed the government of the earth to Nebuchadnezzar and his successors, for the accomplishment of His purposes in

His ways with His people, He held them responsible for the way in which they fulfilled their trust. The verdict is now pronounced upon Belshazzar. Nebuchadnezzar had also failed, if not to the same extent; but, under chastisement from God, he had humbled himself, owned Him as the source of his authority, as the omnipotent Ruler in heaven and on earth, and had extolled and honoured Him as the King of heaven. Belshazzar, blind to all the teachings of the past, had more grievously sinned by magnifying his idols above the God in whose hand his breath was, and had thus lifted up himself against the Lord of heaven. His probation was now ended, and Daniel declared to him the result that, as shown by the mysterious word "Tekel," weighed in God's unerring balances, he was found wanting.

Judgment is contained in the next word, PERES,* the public judgment consequent upon Belshazzar's failure in the use of the power entrusted to him in the government of the earth: "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." The long suffering of God towards the "head of gold" was ended; and hence there is no exhortation to repentance, nothing but the announcement of the result of God's verdict, together with the accompanying judgment. Altogether "this narrative," as has been well said, "gives us the last character of the iniquity of the sovereign power of the Gentiles, in opposition to the God of Israel, and the judgment which falls in consequence upon the monarchy of which Babylon was the head, and to which Babylon had given its own character."

* *Peres* is another form of the word *Upharsin*. The former is the participle passive, and the latter the participle active of the verb *P'ras*, to divide.

Nothing is said as to the effect of this awful interpretation. With the judgment pronounced God had, save the execution of the sentence, done with the man who had arrogantly defied His power. One thing however is added, and that is Belshazzar's last act of royalty. He could not, whatever the attitude of Daniel, allow his public promise of reward to the interpreter to fall to the ground. Men who are false to God are often true to one another in their very selfishness. Belshazzar therefore commanded, "and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom." (v. 29.) If he believed the interpretation, it is evident that he had no conception of the rapidly approaching execution of the sentence he had heard; but "*in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about three score and two years old.*" (vv. 30, 31.)

God thus judged the first of the kingdoms of the Gentiles, and this was the monarchy of Babylon. The event was of the highest importance historically, and of no less moment prophetically; for the moral features which marked Belshazzar's sovereignty will appear in the future Babylon spoken of in Revelation. There it is seen under two aspects—that of a woman, and that of a city.* The moral character of the former is given in these words: *Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth*; and we read of the ruler whose throne was derived from Satan, that "he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that

* For an explanation of these two aspects see *The Visions of John in Patmos*, published by A. S. Rouse, 15 & 16, Paternoster Square.

dwell in heaven." (See Rev. xvii. 5; xiii. 6.) Moreover, as to the judgment of Babylon it is said, "Her plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine"; and so it will happen, for those who bewail her destruction are represented as saying, "Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come." (Chap. xviii. 10.) This will suffice to show the exactness of the correspondence, and the prophetic nature of these historical narratives. (Compare also Jeremiah l. 35-46; li. 24-64.)

A few words should perhaps be said upon the question of the historical event alluded to when Belshazzar was thus surprised and slain in his capital. Isaiah is thought to refer to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in chapter xlv. 1, 2; and in chapter xlvii. he speaks expressly of her sudden destruction. (*vv.* 11-15; see also xxi. 1-9.) Jeremiah also prophecies with more detail of the surprise and taking of Babylon, and that in connection with the Medes (li. 28-32); and this of the two prophecies would rather point to the event recorded in our chapter. There are those who, in the hopeless confusion of the pretended histories of the past,* seek to establish the identity of Darius with Cyrus; but the Scripture narrative is clear that Darius took the kingdom, and that Cyrus is subsequently found in its possession. And let it not be forgotten that the importance of the narrative lies in its moral and prophetic instruction; and happy are they who, with unquestioning confidence in the word of God, have their hearts prepared and opened to receive its teaching.

* In proof of this it may be said, that in *Smith's Bible Dictionary* the articles on *Babylon*, *Cyrus*, and *Darius* are made up mainly of conjecture and of attempts to reconcile the contradictory statements of the ancient records.

CHAPTER VI.

IN this series of historical pictures there are presented, it will be remembered, the moral features which will distinguish, in the last days, the last form of Gentile sovereignty. If Belshazzar, therefore, typified the impiety that dared to lift itself up against the Lord of heaven, Darius sets forth the exaltation of man, and indeed, the substitution of man for God, as an object of worship. This is by no means altered by the fact that he was betrayed into taking this position, or that he himself was a man of an amiable character; for it is still true that he signed the decree, that whosoever should ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of himself, should be cast into the den of lions. (*v.* 7.) It is not what he was in himself, but what he did, that contains the prophetic instruction; and it is quite possible that he, who in a future day will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, and who will sit in the temple of God, and show himself that he is God (2 Thess. ii. 4), will possess many features which will extort the admiration and homage of men. When the Lord was upon the earth there was no beauty in Him that men should desire Him; there was nothing in Him to commend Him to the natural man; but, on the other hand, when Antichrist appears on the scene he will be marked by the features which will attract the hearts of men as men. Of the world, the world will love its own; whereas Christ, who was not of the world, was hated by it. It is

just because Darius was naturally a man of an admirable character that he was fitted to shadow out in this respect this future ruler in his self exaltation and deification.

The first three verses of this chapter furnish the groundwork of what follows, the occasion of the actings that issued in the casting of Daniel into the lions' den. On taking possession of the throne of Babylon, Darius reorganised the affairs of the kingdom; and he "set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes . . . and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was first. . . . Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." (*vv.1-3.*) Belshazzar had, on the eve of the capture of his city, proclaimed Daniel as the third ruler in the kingdom; Darius promoted him to the first place under himself, being God's instrument in doing so for the accomplishment of His purposes. Daniel was no unknown man; and he was hated both as a Jew and as a true worshipper of the God of heaven. His exaltation in the government still further provoked the envy and jealousy of the nobles, the princes, and the presidents over whom he had been placed. A man of incorruptible fidelity, and seeking only to commend himself to God, could not be loved by men of corrupt and covetous hearts. They therefore determined in some way or other to compass his deposition or destruction; and first of all they sought to find occasion against him concerning the kingdom—concerning his administration of the government. There are none so eagle-eyed as malicious men, so that nothing—whether in matters of finance or other branches of the affairs of this vast empire—would escape their notice; "but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch

as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." (v. 4.) What a testimony to the probity and uprightness of this servant of God; and it is all the greater because, as we read in the next verse, it was a testimony borne by his enemies. They knew not that Daniel laboured under the eye of Him who beholds the secrets of the heart, and that it was the joy of his life to walk in the favour and blessing of his God.

Foiled in this direction, with the inventiveness which ever characterises the evil heart, they chose another ground of attack. They said—"these men" (a term seemingly chosen to express their iniquity) said, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." (v. 5.) Idolaters as they all were, and having a sovereign who was also an idolater, it was easy, they thought, to entangle Daniel in their net on such a ground. But Darius could scarcely have been ignorant of what had transpired between Daniel and Belshazzar, or of the fact that he was a godly Jew; and this will account for the method adopted by these princes and presidents. They did not proceed to charge Daniel with worshipping his God; in greater subtlety they determined, first, to flatter the king by offering to him the place of absolute supremacy—supremacy over heaven as well as earth—and then to bring Daniel into conflict with, as well as disobedience to, the king.

As inspired of Satan, their project was cleverly devised, and they sought immediately to put it into execution. Accordingly they "assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever"; and they then informed his majesty that, after due consultation, they had agreed "to establish a royal statute, and

to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions." (*v.* 7.) The only thing wanting to ensure the validity of the decree was the king's signature, and then it could not be changed, "according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." (*v.* 8.) The king, flattered probably by the homage and subjection of his nobles in his new dominions, fell at once into the snare they had woven about his feet, and not pausing to consider the awful place which he was accepting, a place belonging to God alone, "signed the writing and the decree." (*v.* 9.) Nebuchadnezzar had made an image, and had commanded his nobles to be present at its dedication, and to unite in rendering it homage; but Darius himself now took the place of God, and forbade any of his subjects for the space of a whole month, whether in private or in public, to fall down before "any god" but himself. It was the deification of man, which will, as we have pointed out, have its counterpart in the last days, and towards which men are even now proceeding with such rapid steps. The displacement of God by man is seen even in Christendom; what wonder then if, after the church is gone, when the energy of Satan will be unlimited and unhindered, man publicly and avowedly assumes the place of God, even with approbation. Such a consummation is only gradually reached. The steps toward it are silently and unwittingly trodden; for the minds of men are so prepared through teachings which in their fruit must bring in this conclusion, that they will scarcely be astonished when a man who has won their homage by his earthly wisdom and power, declares that he is God.

But what of Daniel in the presence of such a decree?

Will he yield obedience to it? or will he, like his three companions of the captivity, disregard the king's commandment? Who could doubt what his course would be—seeing how faithfully he had spoken both to Nebuchadnezzar and to Belshazzar? The fact, moreover, that, within the circle of his responsibility and allegiance to his monarch, he had served so well that even his enemies could not find matter of accusation, affords a guarantee that he, a servant of the God of heaven, will be no less conscientious in that other sphere where God is supreme. Darius—however he had been entrapped—had stepped outside of the circle of his authority, and had, in signing this decree, intruded into God's circle, where man has neither right nor place. If Daniel, therefore, would maintain a good conscience towards God, he had no alternative but to refuse subjection to the decree that had been issued. When therefore he “knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” (*v.* 10.)

What a spectacle! A man of another race, an object of the envy of the Chaldeans, and enjoying his exaltation simply by the king's favour, dares, at all cost, the power of the whole realm, because he would not be unfaithful to his God! And observe that there was no ostentation in the course he pursued. He continued in his usual course; it was “as he did aforetime.” He might have closed his windows and escaped observation, but to have done this, under the circumstances, would have been all one as if he were respecting the king's decree. His windows had ever been open towards Jerusalem, and they must still be kept so. Daniel, thus morning, noon, and

evening, cried to the Lord "as he did aforetime," regardless, by the grace of God, of the consequences of his act.

There was a reason for his windows being opened towards Jerusalem. At the dedication of the temple Solomon had prayed thus concerning the people, should they be carried away into captivity in the enemy's land, far or near: "If they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives . . . and pray unto Thee toward their land, which Thou gavest unto their fathers, *the city which Thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for Thy name*: then hear Thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven Thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause." (1 Kings viii. 46-49.) Daniel was consequently resting on the sure word of God in thus praying, for the Lord had said to Solomon, "I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me." (1 Kings ix. 3.)

Daniel was no "secret disciple"; his habits of prayer were known, and accordingly his enemies understood how to discover whether he was, or was not, obedient to the decree. "These men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God." (v. 11.) The term "these men," as in verse 5, is again employed (see also v. 15, 24), doubtless to express the divine estimate of their wicked conduct. But they had gained their point; their wicked device, had so far prospered; and, exulting over their success, "they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree." (v. 12.) Had not his majesty, they enquired, signed the decree? The king replied, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not." Alas! the king was in the hands of these unscrupulous men. He had accepted their flattery, and

now he had become their helpless slave. He himself had unsuspectingly riveted his own chains. Having thus secured the monarch in their toils, they proceeded to unveil the purpose of their malicious hearts; and the very words they used did but betray the depth of their iniquity. They said before the king, "That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day." (*v.* 13.)

Their personal enmity to Daniel and to his race, together with their envy because of his position, are plainly revealed, as well as the fact that they had but used the king, in their professed desire for his absolute supremacy, as their tool for the accomplishment of Daniel's destruction. The king was in this way brought face to face with the fruit of his own doings, and could no longer conceal from himself the real object of the writing he had signed. How often it is that we are blinded to the nature of our actions until we encounter their irrevocable consequences! So was it with Darius; and when he heard the accusation against Daniel, he "was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him." (*v.* 14.) His efforts were a testimony to his appreciation of Daniel, and also to the kindness of his own heart; but he was no longer his own master. He himself had declared the immutable character of the laws of the Medes and Persians; and Daniel's enemies were not slow to take advantage of this admission; for they again "assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed." (*v.* 15.) They

asserted their power; and their language, "Know, O king," betrayed their purpose to maintain it at all costs; so that Darius did not dare to trifle any longer with the most influential nobles of his realm, for they, through his own folly, had the law on their side. He therefore "commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions." (*v. 16.*)

The deed was consummated, and "these men" triumphed over both Daniel and Darius. But there was Another on Daniel's side on whom his enemies had not counted; and, as will be seen in following the narrative, their short-lived victory was but the prelude to their own defeat and destruction. If God is for His people none can be successfully against them, whatever the appearances for the moment. Even Darius had, in some way or other, the conviction that Daniel would not be allowed to perish. "Thy God," he said, "whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee." (*v. 16.*) And yet he was still in the power of his servants, and was compelled to carry out his decree to its bitter end; for after the stone had been "brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; . . . the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel." (*v. 17.*)

Before passing on, a remark may be permitted upon the similiarity between the action of Darius and his lords and that of the chief priests and Pharisees, as recorded in Matthew's gospel. These had been allowed of God to compass the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, and after His death He was buried in the sepulchre. Not content with the attainment of their object, they obtained leave of Pilate to make "the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

In both cases man thought to secure his end by making intervention and rescue impossible. But God was not in all his thoughts; and what can man do when he ventures to fight against God?

That the heart of Darius was not in what was done has been plainly seen; and now that the deed had been accomplished, notwithstanding his expressed assurance that God would deliver Daniel, he was filled with remorse. He passed the succeeding night fasting, dispensed with his usual music, his sleep went from him, and, rising early in the morning, he went in haste unto the den of lions. All his thoughts were for the time centred on Daniel. "And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice . . . O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" God had not forgotten His servant; and though Daniel had been exposed to the full display of Satan's power,* he was not, and could not be, injured, for he was under the omnipotent protection of the living God. He was therefore able to reply to the king's question, after the customary loyal address, "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." (v. 22.)

It was thus still true that the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. It should be noticed, however, that Daniel claimed that "innocency" was found in him

* It was, of course, an actual den of lions into which Daniel had been thrown; but we see no reason for departing from the usual typical significance of the lion in Scripture.

before God. The lesson is, that we could not be consciously under God's protection, nor could we claim, or rather expect, His succour if we had not a good conscience in His sight. Before the king Daniel was as clear as before God; like the apostle, he had a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men; and God, later on, stepped in and, vindicating His servant, delivered him, like Paul (2 Tim. iv. 17), from the mouth of the lion.

The decree having been executed, for the penalty of its infraction was that the offender should be cast into the lions' den, not that he should be killed by the lions, the king was freed from the meshes of his lords. The law had been vindicated, and Daniel had suffered its punishment. Darius could therefore, no one forbidding on the ground of the unchangeable laws of the Medes and Persians, exercise his prerogative, and command that Daniel should be taken up out of the den; and being taken up, "no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." (v. 23.) The whole secret of his protection and deliverance is here revealed. Faith, divinely produced in his soul, brought in God, who shielded His servant from the malice of his enemies by subduing and restraining the natural and ravenous instincts of the lions. The apostle, with Daniel in mind, speaking of the prophets, says, "Who through faith . . . stopped the mouths of lions." (Hebrews xi. 33.) It was one of the victories of faith that should encourage the people of God to trust in, and to count upon, Him at all times, remembering that while all things are possible with God, all things are also possible to him that believeth; and it is of this wondrous truth that Daniel is here the exemplification.

The king's work was not completed with the deliverance of Daniel. Made fully aware, by what had taken place, of the enormity of the iniquity of his presidents and princes, he, in righteous indignation, "commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den." (v. 24.) "These men" thus fell into the pit which their own hands had digged, and in the snare which they had laid for Daniel were their own feet taken. In this way God testified to His servant, and executed judgment upon His enemies.

A profound impression was made upon Darius by the events he had witnessed; and he sent a proclamation throughout the whole of his realm, to the different nations "that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end." (vv. 25, 26.) How far he entered into the truth of the words he caused to be written is not revealed. However this might have been, it was no mean testimony he rendered to God and to His sovereignty. He went much farther than Nebuchadnezzar in chapter iii. This monarch contented himself with forbidding his subjects, under extreme penalties, to speak anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Darius commanded that in all his dominions men should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, because He was the living God, and His kingdom was everlasting. In such a marvellous way

did God make the wrath of man to praise Him, and the attempt to quench for ever the light of His testimony in Babylon was made the means of kindling it throughout the whole earth.

At the commencement of this chapter we saw that Darius, in accepting the place which his counsellors offered him, was a type of the future head of the last form of Gentile sovereignty who will accept divine honours, and have his deification enforced upon his subjects. (Rev. xiii. 8-12.) The deliverance of Daniel is also typical. He prefigures the remnant, God's faithful remnant, who will be found in Jerusalem and in the land during the days of Antichrist's fearful sway. Through the machinations of their enemies they will be cast, as it were, into the lions' den, surrounded on all sides by the various displays of Satan's power, and their destruction will appear to human eyes to be imminent and certain. But God will Himself protect them, and interposing for their release by the appearing of Christ, will bring upon their enemies the very judgment which they had designed for His people. This situation of the remnant, previous to the appearing of Christ in glory, is often depicted both in the prophets and in the Psalms. A citation from the latter will make this clear: "My soul," says the Psalmist, speaking as the mouthpiece of the Spirit of Christ in this remnant, "*My soul is among lions*: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Then turning upward, he cries, "Be Thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Thy glory be above all the earth," knowing that when the glory of God is thus displayed at the appearing of Christ, the time of the remnant's deliverance will have arrived.

As indeed he says in a previous verse, "*He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.*" Yet again, in correspondence with the prophetic character of Daniel's deliverance, he says, "They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: *they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.*" (Psalm lvii.) This psalm was written at least five hundred years before the time of Daniel; and yet its resemblance to his experience is so striking as to arrest the attention of any devout reader of the Scriptures. The explanation is, that the circumstances of David, which furnished the occasion for the psalm, as well as those of Daniel were both alike prophetic of those of the remnant in the last days.

And it may be remarked again for the help of the younger students of Scripture, that very few of the narratives of the Bible are simply historical. As histories they are full of interest, and afford moral lessons of great value; but they are also often typical and prophetic. For example, David is a historical personage, and much instruction can be gleaned from his life and conduct, instruction which yields both encouragement and warning. But we have also, in all his rejection and persecution before ascending the throne, to view him as a type of Christ when He came to His own and His own received Him not. So afterwards in the kingdom he presents to us Christ as the King of righteousness, while Solomon, his son, shadows forth the Messiah as King of peace. David, moreover, as we know on the authority of the apostle Peter (Acts ii. 30), was a prophet, and hence it is, as in the Psalm above referred to, that many of his writings are

descriptive of the future, whether of the position and state of the remnant or of the blessings and glory of Messiah's reign and kingdom. It greatly enhances our interest in the Scriptures to remember this, and it enables us at the same time to understand their profound character and God's purpose in the special events recorded.

It only remains to point out that Darius's confession of Daniel's God as the living God is also typical, inasmuch as it prefigures the conversion of the Gentiles, consequent upon the interposition of Jehovah for the rescue of His people, and for judgment upon their enemies. In Psalm xviii. we thus read, after a description of Messiah's victory over His foes, "Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen [nations]: a people whom I have not known shall serve me. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me."* And again, "He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, Thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: Thou hast delivered me from the violent man. Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, among the heathen (the nations), and sing praises unto Thy name." (*vv.* 43, 44, 48, 49.) We learn, therefore, as from all the prophetic writings, that the Lord will deliver His people through unsparing judgments, and that, after He has visited His wrath upon their oppressors, He will establish His throne, and that then all kings will fall down before Him, and all nations will serve Him.

* The marginal rendering is more accurate—"shall yield to me feigned obedience." Afraid before the display of Messiah's power, and apprehensive of the consequences of rebellion, they will, while still hating Him in their hearts, proffer their allegiance.

CHAPTER VII.

WITH this chapter we enter upon the second part of the book. The first part contains the visions seen by the monarchs, together with their actings and the actings of others in relation to Daniel and his companions; and Daniel is brought upon the scene as the messenger from God, possessing His mind, to expound authoritatively the dreams and visions which Nebuchadnezzar had received. All this we have considered, and now, in this second part, we have the visions, with their interpretations, which were vouchsafed to Daniel himself, communications "which contain not merely general principles, but details relative to God's people and the Gentiles who oppressed them—historical details, though given beforehand prophetically." A difference between these and the ordinary prophetic communications will at once be noted. It is not with Daniel, as with the prophets generally, that the word of the Lord came unto him, or that he spake as moved by the Holy Ghost; but he "had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed," or, as in chapter viii., "a vision appeared unto" him. In fact, he was not a messenger to God's people, as, for example, Isaiah and Jeremiah were; but, like John in Patmos, he received revelations of the future for the guidance of God's people in all ages. The visions of Daniel are thus, like those of John, apocalyptic in their nature.

The first of these is recorded in this chapter, and it took place "in the first year of Belshazzar king of

Babylou." (*v.* 1.) We say the first vision, though, as a matter of fact, three visions are here given, commencing with *vv.* 2, 7, and 13; and besides these the interpretation, in answer to his inquiry, is found in *vv.* 17-27. The object of the chapter would seem to be the fourth Gentile empire, and its judgment and supersession by the kingdom of the Son of man. The three first empires are introduced, though briefly, and the chapter thus covers, from another point of view, the same ground as the vision of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter ii. The three visions are all connected and supplementary; and it will, therefore, conduce to a better understanding of them if they are considered in the order in which they are placed, reserving the interpretation until they have been apprehended in their characteristic outlines.

The subject, then, of the first vision was four great beasts: "Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another." (*vv.* 2, 3.) The sea, a mass of waters, will mean, as often in Scripture (see *Rev.* xvii. 1-15) peoples and nations; and, in the case before us, there is a state of anarchy and confusion, inasmuch as "the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea." The winds are various disturbing influences, ordered of God in a providential way, and in judgment, for the accomplishment of His purposes in the government of the earth. Thus, in *Rev.* vii. we have angels holding back the four winds of the earth from their judicial mission until the servants of God should have been sealed in their foreheads. It is the winds of earth there, because the earth was the object of their visitation; whereas in Daniel they are the winds of heaven, as

indicating the source whence they were directed to issue.

It was then out of the sea, out of the masses of the peoples in a state of agitation, if not of chaotic confusion, that the four beasts were seen to arise. It is not, however, to be supposed that their rise was simultaneous, for if it be that they represent, as scarcely any one doubts, the same four empires as Nebuchadnezzar's image typifies, they appear successively on the scene; and, indeed, this is indicated by Daniel in verse 6 (when he says, "After this I beheld, and lo another," &c.), and also in verse 7. It is but a general statement in verse 3, but one showing that all these empires came up into view, and obtained their dominions in the same way; that they sprang into existence as universal empires at a time of revolutionary agitation, and were built up upon the ruins of other kingdoms. All alike are portrayed as beasts, differing in this from the symbolism of Nebuchadnezzar's image. In the image the idea was embodied of the gradual deterioration of the governmental power in the hands of the Gentiles, from Nebuchadnezzar (to whom it was directly committed by God Himself), as the head of gold, down to the iron and clay in the legs and feet. Here all alike, while differing in their character, and perhaps in degrees of excellency, are seen as beasts to show their moral features, for God being shut out, self, selfish appetites, earthly aims and earthly motives and objects, cruelty and rapacity, characterise all these Gentile kingdoms. What a revelation, that all the governments of the earth, from the destruction of Jerusalem until the kingdom of Christ, should be morally figured as "beasts!"

The first, that is, Babylon, "was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were

plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it." (*v.* 4.) Both these symbols—the lion and the eagle—had been before used of Babylon (Jeremiah iv. 7, xlix. 19–22, compared with verse 30), and they speak of majesty and rapidity—rapidity of march and conquest, both of which especially marked the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar. But the prophet beheld a remarkable change. The wings of the beast were plucked; it lost the swiftness of execution which had distinguished it, thus revealing what the empire became in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar's effeminate successors. Moreover, the beast lost its characteristic attitude, was made to stand up like a man, and received the heart of a man—figures of the state of weakness to which Babylon was ultimately reduced. For if a lion is made to stand up, and its whole nature is changed, it has lost both its power and its grandeur.

The second beast was "like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh." (*v.* 5.) As plainly, if Babylon is designated by the first beast, Persia, or rather the Medo-Persian kingdom, is set forth by the second; for we are expressly told in chapter v. that this kingdom succeeded that of Babylon, and, in chapter viii., that it preceded that of Greece. (*vv.* 20, 21.) The fact, moreover, is well known from history. The symbol of a bear will indicate its ferocious character, and raising itself up on one side calls attention to the fact that, composed at the outset of the two kingdoms of the Medes and Persians, one of these—the latter under Cyrus—obtained the superiority, even if it did not absorb the other. The remaining feature, having three ribs in its mouth between its teeth, and the

exhortation, "Arise, devour much flesh," evidently points to the distinguishing feature of this empire, viz., its rapacity—swallowing up, devouring, as it were, kingdom after kingdom.

Greece follows—the Grecian kingdom as formed by the conquests of Alexander. And yet not only as held by him, for "the beast had also four heads"; and hence, just as the single head of gold symbolized Nebuchadnezzar and his dynasty, so the successors of Alexander are seen in these four heads, the dominion of Alexander being finally divided after his death into four kingdoms, ruled over by four of his generals.* The two prominent features, as portrayed by the leopard with the four wings of a fowl on its back, are agility and speed in execution—features which, in a remarkable manner, distinguished Alexander in his wars and conquests. For rapidity and impetuosity he has probably never been surpassed, and it should be borne in mind that these traits of the Grecian king were depicted about two hundred years before he was born. Like Cyrus, therefore, he was girded for his work, though he knew not the One who had called him into existence.

It is in a separate vision that the fourth beast is seen, and the reason is, as has been stated, that it is the fourth kingdom which the Spirit of God has specially in view in this chapter; and on this account the first three beasts are only slightly sketched as introductory, and as, with the fourth, covering the whole period of the times of the Gentiles.

Daniel was, for the same reason, specially arrested by

* Two only of these remained in the issue. The Seleucidæ had Syria, and the Ptolemies Egypt. The other two kingdoms, Greece and Thrace, were soon conquered by the Romans. The two former, Syria and Egypt, continued till about 50 B. C.

the fourth beast, as may be seen from the striking language he was led to employ. He says: "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." (*vv.* 7, 8.) That the Roman Empire is here depicted all expositors agree, whatever their differences of opinion as to the period of the application of parts of the description. No other interpretation, indeed, is possible, as it is easily ascertained that the final successor to Alexander's dominion was Rome. We need not now, however, do more than consider a feature or two of Daniel's vision of this empire, seeing that we have an authoritative interpretation at the end of the chapter.

The prominent characteristic then is strength, resistless might, striking terror into the hearts of those who beheld its relentless and pitiless cruelties. As another has written, "Strength and rapacity, which spare and respect nothing, appropriating everything, or trampling it under foot without regard to conscience; such are morally the characteristics of the fourth beast."* Remark, too, that it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and the explanation of this may perhaps be found in the book of Revelation, where we read of this same beast that

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible* by J. N. Darby, vol. ii. p. 430. New edition, revised.

it "was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." (Chap. xiii. 2.) That is to say, this beast concentrated in itself all the bestial forms which had distinguished its three predecessors, and moreover received its kingdom, in its final form, directly from the hands of Satan. Nebuchadnezzar had received his dominion from God; the revived Roman empire at the close will accept its power from, and be energised by, Satan. It is the complete apostasy of human government; for not only will it, beast-like, derive its motives from, and seek its objects on the earth, and, in lust of aggrandizement and the gratification of its own desires and passions, exclude God from all its designs; but, turning completely round, as completely as the children of Israel did when they worshipped the golden calf, it will also become the willing dependant and bond-slave of Satan. Such will be the issue of all the boasted progress and enlightenment and of all the political science of the closing years of the present age. It will be seen, as far as the ruling powers are concerned, in the dethronement of God and in the exaltation of Satan to His seat!

It is also important to observe that in this vision of the fourth empire Daniel sees it as a whole—that is, from its rise until its termination. Leaving further remark upon this till the close of the chapter, it may be simply added that the proof of it lies in the mention of the ten horns and in the appearance of another little horn with remarkable power and characteristics of intelligence and speech, and from the fact that the destruction of this fourth beast is followed by the introduction of the kingdom of the Son of man.

Daniel thus continues the account of what he saw in his night visions: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down,* and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." (v. 9, 10.) That the Ancient of Days is the Eternal God is undoubted; and it is as evident both from verse 22 and from Rev. i. that the Son of man is the Ancient of Days, the Eternal God. All judgment has been committed to Him because He is the Son of man; and this is plainly declared in the scene before us to be a session of judgment—not the session of judgment of the Great White Throne in Rev. xx., but a session for the judgment of the living (for He will judge the quick, the living, as well as the dead) preparatory to the establishment of His kingdom. (v. 14.) The throne was like the fiery flame, its wheels as burning fire, and a fiery stream came forth from before Him; for fire is ever a symbol in Scripture of the holiness of God as applied in judgment. The myriads of angels also, who serve and wait before Him, point to the same conclusion, even as we read in Matthew, in connection with the judgment of the nations, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory," etc. (Chap. xxv. 31.) The thrones—not the throne at the end of verse 9, which is

* Scarcely anyone doubts that these words should be rendered "set" or "placed" instead of "cast down." The *Revised Version* gives "placed."

that of the Ancient of Days, but the thrones at the beginning of the verse—are those found in Rev. xx.: “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.” (v. 4.) These are the thrones occupied by the saints, the armies in heaven that will follow Christ when He comes forth for the judgment of our chapter. (Rev. xix. 11–21.) The apostle could thus write to the Corinthians, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” They will be thus associated with Christ in the judgment of the living, and on this account Daniel beheld thrones in addition to the one like the fiery flame on which the Judge Himself sat.*

The occasion of the judgment, as revealed to the prophet, is given in the next verse: “I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame.” (v. 11.) The occasion then was “the great words which the horn spake.” In Revelation xiii. it is said of the beast, “There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. . . . and he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven”; and it was on account of these blasphemies that the Ancient of Days came and sat for judgment on His fiery throne. By these daring acts of defiance against God the cup of his iniquity was filled to overflowing, and judgment swift and sure came upon him; for the beast was slain, and his body consigned to the everlasting flame. (Compare Rev. xix. 19–21.)

Then follows the general statement: “As concerning

* It should be remarked that Daniel saw only the thrones themselves, whereas John saw them occupied by those that followed Christ out of heaven.

the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time." (*v.* 12.) It must not be supposed that this was in direct sequence to that which precedes. All four beasts had been exhibited to Daniel, and now, after having given the judgment of the last, the vision goes back to tell us what had been done, not at this session of judgment, but previously in God's judicial dealings in His providential government with the first three beasts. The dominion and life of the last beast were "taken away" at the same time. Not so with Babylon, Persia, and Greece. Babylon continued to exist long after its subjugation by the Medes and Persians; Persia, shorn of her former glory, remains until the present day; and Greece has been once more, in these last years, constituted a kingdom. The lives of these empires have thus been prolonged for a season and a time; but when the Roman empire, after its resuscitation to the astonishment of all beholders, is finally judged, both it and its head will disappear for ever.

Consequent upon the judgment of the fourth beast, is the vision of the kingdom which will never pass away: "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (*vv.* 13, 14.) The Ancient of days, as already seen, is the Son of man; but in this vision they are distinguished. It is often so in the Psalms. The Messiah is Jehovah; and yet in Psalm cx. Jehovah speaks to Adonai: "Sit Thou at my right hand

until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." It is the mystery of the divine persons. They are distinguished in Daniel's vision because, as Son of man, our Lord receives everything from God. Hence, after He is brought to the Ancient of days, it says, "There was *given* Him a dominion," etc. This shows plainly, both from the title, Son of man, and from the fact that He receives His dominion, that what we have here is His universal kingdom, extending throughout the whole earth, which He will establish after His appearing in glory. It is, in one word, the fulfilment of Psalm viii., all things being put under His feet. This vision therefore is immediately connected with verse 11, and the order of events will be, first, the coming of Christ in glory with His saints; then, His judgment of the beast; after that, though not specifically mentioned here, the establishment of His throne in Zion; and, lastly, the rod of Jehovah's strength will go out from that centre (see Psalm cx.), and subdue all people, nations, and languages, that they may serve Him, who is both the Christ and the Son of man. The man of the earth will thus no more oppress for ever; for he will, in the person of the fourth beast, have been dispossessed and judged; but Christ Himself will rule over all the nations of the earth, and the cry will be, "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: He shall judge the peoples* righteously." (Psalm xcvi. 10.)

Some of the features of this glorious kingdom will be seen in the interpretation of the vision; but before entering upon these, the effect on Daniel of what he had seen must be noticed. He says, "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and

* So it should be rendered—not "people," but "peoples."

the visions of my head troubled me." (v. 15.) It is remarkable that while he had been enabled, through having been divinely taught, to explain Nebuchadnezzar's dreams and visions, he could not understand his own. No man knoweth the things of God but the Spirit of God (1 Cor. ii.); and therefore unless He is pleased to communicate the meaning of any divine revelation, it could never be ascertained. Daniel consequently was as dependent on God for the interpretation of his own vision as he had been for Nebuchadnezzar's. It should be said, however, that God never sends a message of any sort, apocalyptic or otherwise, without providing means for its understanding. Both for Nebuchadnezzar and for Belshazzar explanations were at hand, as also for Daniel in this chapter.

But why was the prophet "grieved" and "troubled"? As a godly Jew he would look for the coming Messiah, with His reign of peace, prosperity, and blessing; but now the Spirit of God had opened out before his soul the vista of the future; and, mysterious to him as much of it would necessarily be, he could not but perceive that there was a long pathway of sorrow to be trodden by his people before their longed-for consummation would be reached. He was therefore cast down, and desired of "one of them that stood by" "the truth of all this." Who these standing by were is not revealed: according to the character of the book they were probably angels. The one addressed responded at once to Daniel's request, and "he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things." (v. 16.)

It will be remarked that there are really two interpretations (a general one in verses 17, 18, and then a more specific one in verses 23-27) in reply to Daniel's interro-

gation concerning the fourth beast. Both of these must be considered.

In the general interpretation the angel says, "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." This explanation has been largely anticipated, but there are two or three points which demand further notice. The four kings are viewed as representing their several kingdoms, viz., Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome; and they will therefore, as has been before said, include their dynasties or successors on to the termination of their respective empires. In verse 3 these kings, the beasts, are said to come up from the sea, whereas here they are described as arising out of the earth. In the former passage they are viewed, on the occasion of their appearance and of their acquisition of governmental power, ascending their thrones out of the surging waves of the people; in this verse they are seen rather in their origin, "out of the earth," in contrast with Him who will come out of heaven to take His kingly power. These four then span the whole interval from the prophet's day, for Babylon was still in existence, until the coming of Christ in glory. On this account it is added, "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom," etc., after which there is no other, for they will possess it for ever and ever.

Who, then, are these "saints of the most High"? The term "most High" is used in verses 22, 25, 27, besides verse 18; but it should be noticed that, excepting in verse 25, where the term is used of God Himself as the title He will be known by in the future, it is in the plural; and that consequently the exact rendering is the saints of the

“high places.” And it is scarcely questioned that the term “heavenly places” in Ephesians is derived from this expression in Daniel. It need hardly be said, that a far larger meaning as flowing from the truth of that epistle, which unfolds the eternal counsels of God for the glory of His beloved Son and for the blessing of the saints in Him, is to be attached to these words in Ephesians than in Daniel; but their import in both places is the same in this respect—that they speak of a heavenly sphere, a sphere outside of this world, to which certain saints belong. Who, then, the question may be repeated, are the saints so described? In the larger and more general sense they comprise, as may easily be gathered from the epistle to the Ephesians, all believers from Pentecost to the coming of Christ, all who are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, and therefore compose His body. But such an anticipation and revelation of the “mystery” (Ephesians iii. 3) could scarcely be expected in the prophet Daniel. While, however, they might be in the mind of the Spirit; for they that suffer with Christ will reign with Him, and hence they must not be excluded by the Christian reader, another class must be sought for, to whom the description will apply. If now we turn for a moment to Revelation xx. we shall see that there are two classes who are added to the first resurrection, those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and those (for so it should be read) who had not worshipped the beast (the fourth beast of our chapter), neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (v. 4.) During the terrible times of the “little horn’s” domination these saints had refused to acknowledge his power,

for they owned and worshipped the God of heaven, confessing that His was the kingdom both in heaven and on earth, and that the heavens did rule, and hence they, in view of what awaited them and of the special honour to be accorded to them, are also termed "saints of the high places." Though on earth they belonged to heaven, for instead of being preserved for earthly blessings under the reign of their glorious Messiah, the brighter portion awaited them of reigning with Him in the kingdom. And it is to these that special reference is made in our verse, although the general statement may include all the heavenly saints, when it says, that the saints of the high places shall take the kingdom, etc.

Daniel then proceeded to inquire more particularly concerning the fourth beast; and it will be observed that, while he repeats what he had seen, as given in verses 7, 8, he adds two things not before mentioned. In verses 21, 22 he says, "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." The explanation of these additions will come in when considering the authoritative interpretation given to Daniel; but attention is now called to them as an illustration of the fact that there are no mere repetitions in Scripture. The connection, or the object, is different, or, as here, the interest is enhanced by a further revelation, so that no scripture, which seems the same as another, should ever be lightly passed over. The fact of a seeming repetition should invite all the closer study to receive the fresh light communicated.

We pass now to the angelic exposition of the vision of the fourth beast. Having already pointed out in verses

7, 8 that the Roman empire is symbolized by the fourth beast, it is only necessary to dwell upon the special characteristics here explained. First, it is said that this kingdom "shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces." (v. 23.) Those who are acquainted with history will confess that a more accurate description of the Roman empire, in its character, progress, and dominion, could not have been conveyed. It was different from all its predecessors in the nature of its government, combining, as it did, the utmost absolutism with democratic forms, mingling thus the iron and the clay of Nebuchadnezzar's image. By its irresistible arms it acquired almost universal dominion, devoured the whole earth, and subdued and broke to pieces nations on every hand. These statements apply to its rise and zenith—especially to the period of the Consuls and the Cæsars.

Next, we are told, that "the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise." (v. 24.) This is really the crucial point in the interpretation, for the question arises, inasmuch as verse 23 refers undoubtedly to the past, whether these ten kings are past or future. There are those who contend entirely for what is termed the historical interpretation, and maintain that the prophecy has thus been fulfilled.* The fatal objection to this theory lies in the fact that this fourth kingdom having been judged, is immediately succeeded and displaced

* To cite a representative interpreter of this school, Mr. Elliott says that the ten kings are found in the "Anglo-Saxons, Franks, Allemans, Burgundians, Visigoths, Suevi, Vandals, Heruli, Bavarians, Ostrogoths, ten in all"; and he labours thereon to prove "the connection of those ten early barbaric kingdoms with the bishops of Rome as their *ecclesiastical* and *spiritual* head; agreeably with the Apocalyptic symbol of the ten horns, sprouting from the Beast's eighth head." (*Hours Apocalypticæ*, vol. iii., pp. 124-134, fourth edition.)

by the kingdom of the Son of man. (*vv.* 13, 14, 26, 27; compare also chap. ii. 43, 44.) For what event in the past, it may well be enquired, could answer, even in the smallest degree, to that spoken of in the above scriptures? It is only indeed by spiritualizing the kingdom of the Son of man, and interpreting it as Christianity, that any show of evidence in support of such a theory can be obtained. But even so, what is there in the public course of Christianity that corresponds with the predicted universal dominion of the Son of man, before whom all kings will fall down, and whom all nations will serve? If such an explanation could be accepted, any possible view might be read into the words of Scripture. But this is not the way of the Spirit of God. He speaks clearly and definitely, and when He uses the term the "Son of man," and describes the extent and glory of His kingdom, and this as following upon the governments of the earth, it may be easily ascertained by the unbiassed student of Scripture that He refers neither to the church nor to Christianity, but to the kingdom which Christ will establish in this world in a future day, when He will return with His saints in glory.

Accepting this view all is plain, and we thus understand that in this divine communication received by Daniel, the Roman empire is seen as a whole, from the time of its establishment on to its resuscitation, as explained in Rev. xvii. 10-13,* and its destruction at the appearing of the Lord. There is, on this account, a large interval of time between verses 23, 24, only it should be remembered, that if verse 23 portrays the Roman empire in its pristine energy and strength, the same features will reappear in

* See, *The Visions of John in Patmos*, p. 224, for a further elucidation of this subject.

its final form ; and hence that the portraiture, as is often the case in scripture, is both historical and prophetic.

These ten kings are then future, and they point to the peculiar form of the last phase of the fourth kingdom, that there will be ten kingdoms in Western Europe confederated under one imperial head. This fact is shadowed out in the ten toes of the image Nebuchadnezzar saw, and is plainly stated in the Apocalypse (chap. xvii. 12, 13). Insisting on this as the mind of the scripture before us, it can well be conceived that in the past there have been adumbrations of this final fulfilment ; but the mistake is, to claim these foreshadowings as the fulfilment itself, instead of regarding them as finger-posts by the way to indicate the consummation intended.

Not only will there be these ten kings, but "another shall rise after them ; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High,* and think to change times and laws : and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." (vv. 24, 25.) This is the little horn of verses 8, and 20, 21 ; but is entirely distinct, as will afterwards be explained, from the little horn in chapter viii. 9. The horn of our chapter is in connection with the Roman empire in the west of Europe, where the ten kings will exercise their sovereignty within the boundaries, speaking generally, of the ancient Roman empire in Europe ; † whereas the horn of chapter

* Here again the word is in plural, and it should be rendered as in verse 18, "high places."

† The reader can easily trace these boundaries in any Scripture Atlas, or in most Bibles that contain maps, and he will then perceive the meaning of the term "Western Europe." Germany, Scandinavia, and European Russia were never within the territory of the empire.

viii. will have his seat in Syria, and is often mentioned in scripture as the king of the north.

Several particulars of the little horn of our chapter should be noted in order to his identification. First of all he arises after the ten kings, and he is different from these,* though in what respect he is distinguished from them is not stated. Secondly it is said that "he shall subdue three kings," that is, three out of the ten who are on the scene when he arises. In the next place it is evident that he acquires the power of the whole empire, for it is "his dominion" that is taken away when the judgment sits. Lastly, the very same things are ascribed to him in verse 25 as are imputed to the first beast of Rev. xiii. in verses 5-7. The conclusion therefore is irresistible that the little horn is no less a personage than the head of the revived Roman empire in Western Europe in the last days; and this conclusion is still further strengthened by the statement in Rev. xvii., that the ten kings "have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast." (v. 13.) The little horn thus arises after the formation of the ten kingdoms, and having subdued three of these, whether by military prowess or other means, the other seven are led in conjunction with the three subdued kingdoms to unite in one vast confederation, of which the little horn becomes the imperial head. If Rev. xiii. 1-8, and chapter xvii. are read in this connection the whole position of the little horn will be more clearly apprehended.†

* The words "the first" (v. 24) are plural, and hence refer to the ten kings.

† If the little horn of this chapter foreshadows the head of the revived Roman empire in the last days, it should be remembered that the Antichrist will be existent at the same time, that he will be associated with the Roman head, will exercise "all the power of the first beast before

His moral character is presented next to us in the words, "And he shall speak great words against the most High." (v. 25.) Not only is his carnal mind, as is the case with every unregenerate man, enmity against God, but in his mad impiety he also dares to take the ground of open defiance. (Compare Rev. xiii. 5, 6.) As a consequence—for he that hates God must also hate His people—he will "wear out the saints of the high places" (he "made war with the saints, and prevailed against them." verse 21) in his presumptuous effort to destroy the name of God from off the face of the earth. (See Rev. xiii. 7, xiv. 12, 13.) God will thus allow the patience of His earthly people to be tested; for as yet they will not know that Jesus of Nazareth is their promised Messiah. They will cry to the God of their fathers, and turn to Him for succour, as we find in the psalms that treat of this period; but it is not until the Lord appears from heaven that they will look upon Him whom they had pierced, and have their eyes open to discern, like Thomas, that the once crucified Jesus is their Lord and their God. This enables us to understand why He allows them to fall at this time, for their chastisement and purification, into the hands of their enemy. But though their enemy, as the instrument of Satan, may sift them, not one single grain of wheat shall fall to the ground. This were impossible, for, to cite another illustration, the hairs of their head will all be numbered.

The next clause of verse 25 reveals plainly who these

him," and will cause "the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the beast whose deadly wound was healed," as well as induce them to make an image "to" him to be worshipped. (Rev. xiii.) He will be thus in every way morally identified with the western beast, and hence it is that, as his prophet, he will share in the same doom. (Rev. xix. 20.)

saints are. This little horn will "think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand." At this period the Jewish temple will have been rebuilt, though in unbelief; and in connection with it the ordinances of the law and the various feasts will have been established. These are the "times and laws" which this king will think to change, that is, to abrogate, because their very existence, whatever the state of the people who observe them, will constitute a testimony to the existence of God, and this will be insupportable to one who desires to occupy for himself the place of God. And he will succeed in their abolition; for they (*not* the saints, but the times and laws) will be given into his hand. Antiochus Epiphanes, as he is known in history, and of whom we shall find traces in chapter xi., did the same thing, and profaned the temple; and his exploits will be repeated, in a still more terrible way, by this little horn at the time of the end. But He who will allow His people to be cast into the burning fiery furnace of persecution, will determine the limit of the power of the enemy: it will only be for a time and times, and the dividing of time, the 1260 days, the forty-two months, the three years and a half of the book of Revelation. Our Lord speaks of the commencement of this period when, citing from Daniel, He says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains," &c. (Matt. xxiv. 15; Daniel xii. 11; compare chap. ix. 27.)

At the termination of this allotted period "the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." (v. 26.) As

this session of judgment had been fully revealed to the prophet, the interpretation only gives this passing reference to it. It is a judgment conducted by the Ancient of days from His fiery throne, with all His attendant majesty, accompanied by His myriads of angels (*vv.* 9, 10); and we learn moreover, and this also proves that the Ancient of days is the Son of man, that the saints who come with Christ, the heavenly saints, will be associated with Him in the judgment (*v.* 22; compare Psalm cxlix. 6-9) of that day, when God will take public and formal cognizance of the acts and words of this daring enemy. It is for this purpose that the books will be opened (*v.* 10), the books that will contain the infallible records of this impious sinner's deeds, and the sentence will be passed according to the requirements of the glory of Him who will sit on His holy throne.

The execution of the sentence is thus recorded: "And they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end." (*v.* 26.) Adding to this description what we find in verse 11, it will be seen what the judgment was on his person, though, strictly speaking, only the "body" of the beast is there spoken of. The "great words which the horn spake" are, however, mentioned as the occasion of the judgment. Turning for a moment to Revelation xix., we find some supplementary information. In connection with the same judgment, we read that both the beast and the false prophet were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. (*v.* 20.) Deprived of his dominion, having, like Belshazzar, been weighed in the balances and found wanting, he suffers with the false prophet the vengeance of eternal fire, and will be cast alive into it. The prayer of David is thus fulfilled: "Let God arise, let His enemies be

scattered: let them also that hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God"; or, as he says in another place, "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick [living] into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them." (Psalms lxxviii. 1, 2; lv. 15.)

Judgment having been passed upon the little horn, and his dominion having been taken away, consumed and destroyed unto the end, "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High ["high places"], whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." (v. 27.) This is the kingdom of the Son of man which, consequent upon the judgment and removal of the last of the four world empires, is established upon earth. In verses 13, 14 we have His investiture. As Son of man, He receives the kingdom from the Ancient of days. Already we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. In the scene before us all things are given into His hands, to be put in subjection under Him; for He must reign until all enemies are put under His feet. In verse 27, however, it is "the people of the saints of the high places" who are brought into prominence, and who are said to have the kingdom given to them. Yet it is not apart from Christ, as at the end of the verse it says, "Whose" (*i.e.* Christ's) "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." It is His kingdom, only He is pleased in His grace to associate with Himself "the people of the saints of the high places." Who then are these? As already pointed

out in verse 18, "the saints of the high places" are said to take the kingdom; and in verse 22 "the saints" possess it, while here it is "the people of the saints of the high places." There is a reason for this term. It means the Jews; and they are thus denominated as being, during the millennial kingdom, connected with, if not dependent upon, the saints of the high places. The latter reign with Christ; through the former Christ will subdue the nations, and exercise His sovereignty over the earth; for "the Lord shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion; rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies." (Psalm cx. 2. See also Jeremiah li. 19-21; Isaiah lx. 10-16.)

There are then three classes specified in this chapter. "The saints of the high places," in verse 22, would seem to be the heavenly saints; in verse 18 the same term, while not excluding the heavenly saints, refers especially to the saints on earth during the domination of the little horn, who look up to God, and acknowledge Him as the God of heaven, and as the only source of authority, whether in heaven or upon earth. They are regarded on this account as belonging to heaven, and, as we learn from Rev. xx., will ultimately participate in the first resurrection, and reign with Christ a thousand years. Lastly, the people of the saints of the high places are earthly saints, God's ancient people, who in the mercy and faithfulness of their God, brought through all their trials and sorrows, will at length possess the kingdom and dominion on earth under the reign of their exalted and glorified Messiah.

The conclusion of these visions and their interpretation is now reached; but the prophet adds, "As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance

changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart." (*v.* 28.) If it is an unspeakable honour to be made the depositary of divine thoughts, the vessel must suffer, and the more so because the time for their communication had not yet arrived. At this period Daniel was in the midst of all the splendour and magnificence of the empire of Babylon, whose authority extended to the ends of the earth, and whose stability was unquestioned. But the scroll of the future had been unrolled before his astonished gaze, and he saw in the long vista that stretched far away into the coming centuries, a succession of wars, conflicts, tyrannies, and oppressions before He who had retired from His throne at Jerusalem would interpose, bestow the sovereignty of the earth upon the Subject of all Jewish hopes, and re-establish His beloved people in blessing under Messiah's peaceful and glorious reign. Daniel had indeed seen the visions of God, but they had brought death into his own soul, and thereby he was divinely qualified to be the channel of these divine revelations. (Compare 2 Cor. iv. 7-18, etc.)

CHAPTER VIII.

TWO changes mark the commencement of this chapter. From chapter ii. 4 to the end of chapter vii. the language employed is Chaldee; from verse 1 of this chapter to the end of the book it is Hebrew. While the Spirit of God was unfolding things connected with the Gentile monarchs and their actings, present and future, together with the character and course of their several kingdoms, He used the tongue of the country in which Daniel dwelt; but the moment He begins to treat of their actings in relation to the land and to the sanctuary, He returns to the sacred language.* Secondly, the scene is changed. Until now Daniel had been in Babylon; here, "in the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar," when the vision of this chapter appeared unto him, he was "at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam," a country adjacent to Persian territory, and which seems afterwards to have become a Persian province. It was here "by the river of Ulai" that Daniel "saw in a vision." "Then," he says, "I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great."

* We say "returns," because chapters i.-ii. 1-3 is in Hebrew.

(*vv.* 2-4.) This is a symbolic description of "the kings of Media and Persia" * (*v.* 20); and it represents the dual character of that empire, composed as it was of Media and Persia (see chapter v. 28, vi. 8); and the fact, in that the horn that came up last was higher than the other, that the Persian part of the kingdom ultimately gained the ascendancy. Darius the Mede was thus succeeded by Cyrus the Persian; and the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, invincible in its conquests, and doing "according to his will," exhibits this kingdom in the zenith of its power and aggrandizement, and probably during the reign of Cyrus. The rapacity of this empire in its career of victorious conflict was pointed out when considering chapter vii. 5. This was the second of the four Gentile kingdoms, and consequently the successor of Babylon.

Daniel next relates what he further saw in these words: "And as I was considering, behold, an he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes." (*v.* 5.) The goat sets forth "the king of Grecia," the king being here, as often, the expression of the sovereignty or kingdom; and, consequently, the "notable horn" stands for the Alexander whose martial genius, courage, and victories, have been so largely celebrated in history. The rapidity of his movements, which was a conspicuous feature in his campaigns, is strikingly described in the vision: "An he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground." In about ten years he conquered almost all the kingdoms of the then known world. In verses 6, 7 we have the attack of

* It is said that a ram was used as an emblem of their kingdom by the Persians themselves, and a goat by the Macedonians.

Alexander upon Persia figuratively described; and yet, though the language is symbolic, a more accurate description of his conquest could not have been conveyed. The goat "came to the ram that had two horns . . . and ran unto him in the fury of his power." Again: "And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns" (*vv* 6, 7.) The very words used express a specially hostile feeling on the part of Persia's assailant; and this was the case, for Greece had never forgotten the invasion of their country by the Persian hordes, and they burned to revenge themselves upon their enemy. No less graphically is the utter powerlessness of Persia in the presence of her foe portrayed: "There was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand." (*v.* 7.) In fact the duration of the Persian empire had, by God's appointment, reached its termination; and the kingdom which He had destined to succeed it was now to obtain the supremacy. The battles of Issus and Arbela are among the decisive battles of the world, and they were decisive because God was using Alexander "the Great" to accomplish His purposes in respect of the government of the earth.

The object of the mention of Persia and Greece, and of these two only, in this place is well stated in the following words: "The two empires of Persia and Greece, or of the East, which succeeded that of Babylon under which the prophecy was given, are only introduced to point out the countries in which these events are to take place, and to bring them before us in their historical order. The Persian empire is overthrown by the king of Greece, whose empire is afterwards divided into four

kingdoms, from one of which a power arises that forms the main subject of the prophecy."* This last sentence will be explained by the two following verses: "Therefore the he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." (vv. 8, 9.) A long stretch of history is compressed into this compendious statement, which contains, however, all the points affecting the prophetic subject of the chapter. First, the fact of the establishment of the Grecian kingdom is given; then the death of Alexander in the midst of his triumphs—"when he was strong";—the subsequent partition of his empire between four of his generals; and finally the rise out of one of these of "a little horn, which waxed exceeding great."

Leaving the reader, if he so desire, to pursue the examination of the history, it will suffice to here state, that the four kingdoms, as pointed out in chapter vii., into which Alexander's empire was ultimately divided, were Syria, Egypt, Greece, and Thrace. The two latter soon succumbed to the advancing Roman power; but the two former continued till about 50 B.C. The one out of which the little horn arose was Syria, and for reasons which will appear in the course of the prophecy, this little horn was the king known as Antiochus Epiphanes. It will therefore be seen, if what was said of the little horn of chapter vii. be remembered, that the two little horns are entirely distinct; that the one of chapter vii.,

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, by J. N. Darby, vol. ii., p. 438. New edition, revised.)

which subdues three kings, and finally wields the whole power of the empire, belongs to the west. It is the dominion of the revived Roman empire which he possesses. The little horn of chapter viii. has his seat and throne in Syria, and it is on this account that he becomes such a remarkable foreshadowing of the personage so often mentioned in the prophetic scriptures as the Assyrian, and as the king of the north.*

This little horn extended his kingdom, "waxed exceeding great toward the south," that is, toward Egypt, which is always so denominated as being south of Palestine; "toward the east," that is, toward Parthia and Armenia, etc.; and "toward the pleasant land," that is, Palestine. All these again are well-known facts of history, and the various campaigns of this notorious king in these several countries are given in historical records.†

It is in the next three verses that his doings in respect of the "pleasant land" are found, the doings, indeed, to which our attention is specially directed as of great prophetic importance: "And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them." (v. 10.) The first thing necessary for the understanding of this description is to ascertain the import of the "host of heaven." That the sun, moon, and stars are indicated by this term is seen in one of the Psalms: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalm xxxiii. 6); and it is

* See, for example, Isaiah x. 24; xiv. 25; xxxi. 8; Micah v. 5; Daniel xi. 6, 8, etc.

† His actings in respect of the pleasant land are narrated in 1 Maccabees, which, though no part of Sacred Scripture, is judged to be accurate in the main. This remark will not apply to the other books of the Maccabees, except perhaps in measure to the second book.

as plain from the Scriptures that the sun, moon, and stars represent, symbolically, ruling authorities—the sun supreme, the moon derivative, and the stars subordinate authorities. This symbolic significance is drawn from the actual functions assigned to the heavenly luminaries. In Genesis we read, “And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: [He made] the stars also” (chap. i. 16); and in Psalm cxxxvi. it says, “To Him that made great lights . . . the sun to rule by day . . . the moon and stars to rule by night.” (*vv.* 7–9.) In accordance with the emblematical meaning thus drawn, we have the sun, moon, and stars introduced in Rev. xii. 1, and the stars in *v.* 4.*

The conclusion, therefore, may be safely drawn, that the “host of heaven” in our Scripture is figurative of some ruling authorities. Who then are they? The references in the following verse point, without doubt, to Jerusalem as the place where they existed at the time indicated; that is, a period after Persia had been conquered by Greece. It is indispensable to bear this in mind, because, as we learn from Ezra and Nehemiah, the temple and the holy city had been rebuilt during the sovereignty of Persia. The temple services were organised at the period spoken of, whatever the state of the people and the corruption into which they had fallen; and provision had been made in measure for their government according to Jewish customs and forms. The “host of heaven” will thus signify those who held the place of authority in the Jewish polity, those who occupied, by whatever means, positions of responsibility in the government of the Jewish

* For an exposition of these Scriptures see *The Visions of John in Patmos.* A. S. Rouse, London.

people. Stars are employed, it will be remembered, in Rev. i.—iii., as emblems of those who have the place of rule in the church, the assembly; and in like manner, the host of heaven designates those to whom rule was entrusted at this epoch in the midst of the Jews.

What we learn then from our scripture is that this little horn, Antiochus Epiphanes (and that he did so is a matter of history), assailed the ruling powers among the Jews, cast down some of different grades, “stamped” upon them, and subjected them to every species of ill-treatment and degradation, even to destruction.

The next verse carries us further, and gives us more details; but it should be carefully observed that from the beginning of *v.* 11 to the word “transgression” in *v.* 12 is an explanatory parenthesis, so that the clause after this word is connected with the end of *v.* 10. This may be readily perceived if it be noticed that in the parenthesis “he” is employed, whereas after it the neuter pronoun “it” is again used (agreeing with “horn”) as found in *vv.* 9, 10. Taking now the parenthesis, we read, “Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host [*i.e.*, the prince of the host of heaven], and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression.” (*vv.* 11, 12.) The change from “it” to “he,” which has been pointed out, would seem, it has been suggested, to show that it was the king in person who so acted—the king figured by the little horn—and this suggestion commends itself from the fact that the little horn might be expressive, though in a general way, of the power of the kingdom. We gather then that such was the daring of this king that he ventured openly and avowedly to set himself in opposition to Him who

was no less than Jehovah. In profession, at least, the Jewish rulers were God's servants; and their Prince, the One they waited for, whatever their carnal expectations, was Israel's God, the One who afterwards appeared in this world as Jehovah-Jesus to save His people from their sins.

The next clause is obscure, but most agree that it should be rendered, "and *from* him [not *by* him] the daily sacrifice was taken away." This means that it was taken away from Jehovah, that it was, in fact, suppressed—it does not say by whom, though the context points very plainly to the little horn, the king himself. The beginning of the next verse reveals also that, whatever the wickedness of the agent, he was but an instrument in the hands of God for the chastisement of those who were in the place of His people, for this wicked king was allowed to succeed in his designs against the daily sacrifice "by reason of transgression." Moreover, "the place of His sanctuary was cast down." For the time all Jewish rites and sacrifices were abolished, and Zion, the holy mountain, was defiled by the Gentile oppressor.* In addition to this the little horn (for now the connection with *v.* 10 is resumed) "cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered." Together with the abolition of the daily sacrifices, and the profanation and destruction of the sanctuary, the truth, as Isaiah speaks, was fallen in the streets, "cast down" by the violence of the enemy; and this wicked power practised—practised by subtleties, plans, and schemes—and prospered. †

* See for the history of these particulars 1 *Maccabees* i.

† Psalm lxxix. may be read as a commentary upon the state of things at this time in Jerusalem.

At this point of the vision Daniel "heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." (*vv.* 13, 14.) Passing by the question for the present (as it must come before us in examining the interpretation), whether this period of time named in the answer of the angel has any prophetic significance, it will be enough now to perceive that it must have had an historical application. The sacrifice was taken away, the place of the sanctuary was defiled, "cast down," by the personage denominated as the little horn; the temple was cleansed again after a certain time by the Maccabees, and the sacrifices were restored, so that there is no necessary connection between this period and those named of a different duration in chapter xii.

The prophet was not content with the vision itself, but he "sought for the meaning." The desire of his heart was approved of God, for He delights in communicating His mind to the seeking soul; and hence no sooner did the prophet wish to know the meaning of the vision than the interpreter was at hand. He says, "Behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision." (*vv.* 15, 16.) Gabriel, obedient to the command he had received, came near where Daniel stood. Afraid in the presence of his angelic visitant, the prophet fell upon his face; but Gabriel "said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the

vision." Daniel, overcome, was in a deep sleep on his face toward the ground; "but he touched me, and set me upright." (*vv.* 17, 18.) Gabriel thus imparted understanding and strength to enable him to receive the interpretation of the vision. The title "Son of man" is also given him, the significance of which may be gathered from the following remarks upon the same title as bestowed on Ezekiel. It is "a title that suited the testimony of a God who spoke outside His people, as being no longer in their midst; but, on the contrary, was judging them from the throne of His sovereignty. It is Christ's own title, looked at as rejected and outside of Israel, although He never ceases to think of the blessing of the people in grace. This puts the prophet in connection with the position of Christ Himself." *

Before proceeding with the explanation of the vision, it will be for profit to again state distinctly the relation of a divine interpretation to the thing interpreted. The interpretation never confines itself to the matter to be explained, but adds whatever may be necessary to bring out the mind of God in the thing communicated. A simple illustration from John xiv. will unfold the principle. When the Lord had spoken of manifesting Himself to the one who had His commandments and kept them, Judas enquired as to how He could manifest Himself to His own, and not to the world. In the answer to this question our Lord goes much beyond (at least in explaining its import) what He had before said. Instead of manifesting Himself, we have "we (the Father and the Son) will come unto him, and make our abode with him." All this unquestionably lay in His first statement, but it would not have been apprehended unless He had

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. ii., pp. 370-1.

explained it. And in the interpretation of a prophetic vision additions and applications are made in order to bring out its divine meaning—a meaning which otherwise would have been hidden.

So is it here. What Daniel *saw* was fulfilled, historically, in Antiochus Epiphanes during the time of the Maccabees; but we now learn from Gabriel's interpretation that this historical fulfilment was also prophetic of another fulfilment, and hence that the full realization of what is described will be after the rapture of the Church, when the Jews will be once more in their own land.* Thus in the very first words of the angel he says, "At the time of the end shall be the vision"; and again, "Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be." (*vv.* 17, 19.) There is a remarkable proof in the prophet Isaiah, that the period here spoken of refers to the last days—a passage in which he speaks of the Assyrian, or the king of the north, of whom "the little horn," Antiochus Epiphanes, is such a striking figure: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while, and *the indignation* shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction." (Chap. x. 24, 25.)

That this scripture applies to the future may be seen from the fact that the apostle Paul so uses the immediate context (Rom. ix. 28); and this was the important point for Daniel to understand, that the vision had to do with

* Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, in a volume of published discourses, called special attention to this prophetic principle, that *a* fulfilment became, in God's hand, the shadow of a deeper fulfilment.

the accomplishment, through sorrows and tribulation, of God's purposes of blessing for His beloved people. It is true that Antiochus had not yet arisen; but with this authentic unfolding of the vision, it would be impossible for any one acquainted with it to suppose, however closely Antiochus might resemble him, that he was the personage here delineated, unless the issue of his advent had been the restoration and blessing of the chosen nation.

Seeing then that the fulfilment of this vision is yet future, the details of the angelic interpretation may now be considered. Since, however, in dealing with the vision itself, many of these have been necessarily anticipated, it will suffice to show their bearing and connection. In verses 20-23 we have it authoritatively stated that the two kingdoms figured by the ram and the goat (*vv.* 3-7) are Persia and Greece, and it will be recalled that the introduction of these two kingdoms in this chapter is merely to show the quarter whence the little horn is to arise. Greece succeeds Persia in the world-empire; the notable horn of Greece, Alexander the Great, is broken, and "four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power." These kingdoms have already been specified; but the angel adds one particular, that they will not be in the power of their predecessor. Then, leaping over the interval from the existence of these four kingdoms to "the time of the end" (*v.* 17), for at that period the Assyrian, the king of the north, will have appeared, and will exercise his sovereignty in the same regions as the little horn of verses 9, 10, Gabriel proceeds: "And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up." (*v.* 23.) This is the personal description of

the antagonist of Israel in the last days, the one of whom Isaiah so often speaks as the Assyrian.* Pride and cruelty seem to mark his appearance; and a kind of supernatural wisdom (understanding dark sentences), enabling him to penetrate into the meaning of mysterious forms of speech, will give him ascendancy over the minds of men, and especially over the Jewish mind in alienation from God. In himself he is not to be a powerful king, for if mighty, it will not be "by his own power"; that is, he will be sustained in his realm by a mightier potentate than himself.†

Next, the actions of this fierce king are described: "He shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people." The location of this king, it must not be forgotten, like that of his prototype, will be in Syria, in the north of Palestine, and hence his designation in this book (chap. xi.) as the king of the north; and thus, being on the borders of, he will wax exceeding great towards, the pleasant land, as we learn from verse 9. This explains the statement of our verse concerning his deadly hostility to the Jews. As another has written, "He will make great havoc, will prosper and practise, destroying the mighty, or a great

* It may be interesting to recall, in proof that the Assyrian is a future enemy, what has been often noticed, that Assyria historically succumbed to Babylon, whereas prophetically the Assyrian is, after the restoration of Israel to their own land, their last external adversary.

† Two things are often put together in connection with this statement, viz., that the seat of the sovereignty of this king will be in Asiatic Turkey; and, secondly, that Russia, as plainly shown in Ezekiel xxxviii. and xxxix., will be the final enemy of Israel, after their establishment in the land in blessing under their Messiah. The deduction is then made that the power behind this king of the north will be Russia. It *may* be so, but where Scripture does not speak positively, a conjecture can only be accepted as a possibility.

multitude of persons, and especially 'the people of the holy ones'; that is, the Jews. (Chap. vii. 27.) He is subtle, and his craftiness is successful. He will magnify himself in his heart, and will destroy many by means of a false and religious security." Altogether it is a fearful portraiture of one who will be an apt tool of Satan, and yet withal an instrument in the hand of God for the chastisement of the ungodly Jews. He will be a man of resolute will, refined cruelty, one practised in designing craftiness, a master of occult knowledge, and one of such determined purpose that he will allow nothing to stand in the way of the execution of his own selfish designs; for all his object will be his own aggrandizement and exaltation. Such will be one of the powerful enemies of the Jews, after they have been restored to their own land, and have rebuilt the temple, while still in unbelief, before the appearing of their Messiah in glory.

But his career of prosperity will be his ruin. Deceived by his own successes and lifted up in heart, he will venture also to "stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand." The fact only is stated that this earthly monarch will dare to be the open antagonist to Him who will soon assert His title as King of kings and Lord of lords, and that in some way, "without hand," he will meet with instant destruction. The same event is probably alluded to in chapter xi., where it says that "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him" (v. 45); and as the occasion of his being in the "pleasant land," when condign punishment thus overtakes him, is there given with some detail, it will be more suitable to defer further remarks till this passage is reached.

Gabriel finally affirms the truth of the vision which Daniel had received, and commands him to shut it up,

“for it shall be for many days.” Under the burden of these divine communications Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days. (*v.* 27.) The vessel was strained by the contents, portending so much of sorrow and tribulation, which had been poured into it, and for a time was disabled. “Afterward,” he says, “I rose up, and did the king’s business” (ever faithful to his earthly master); “and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.” Who were the “none” is not explained, although we may be sure that they were of Daniel’s companions in captivity. Even the people of God do not listen willingly to the prophet of coming sorrows, while the prophet of smooth things ever finds a ready ear. Hence it is that a soul who is in the secret of the divine mind must be content to be unappreciated and to walk alone.

CHAPTER IX.

DANIEL appears in a new character in this chapter. Hitherto we have seen him as the recipient in different ways of divine and prophetic communications; we now behold him discovering the mind of God from studying the Scriptures, and as an intercessor for God's chosen people. How long an interval had elapsed between this and the preceding chapters cannot be ascertained, since we know not the duration of Belshazzar's reign. Belshazzar, on account of his impiety, had forfeited his life under the just judgment of God, and "Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes . . . was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans"; and the events of this chapter took place "in the first year of his reign." (*vv.* 1, 2.)

Two things evidently distinguished Daniel: an intense love for the place where God's honour had dwelt; and an undying affection for God's people. He might truly have been the mouthpiece of his fellow-captives in the well-known psalm, the authorship of which is not revealed, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." (Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6.) It was doubtless this love for Jerusalem that led him to the writings of Jeremiah, to ascertain how long it was to remain in desolation; and he says, giving the result of his study, "I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the

prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." (v. 2; Jeremiah xxv. 11, xxix. 10.)

The effect of this discovery on Daniel was, in his unquenchable love for his people, to lead him to identify himself with their state, to confess their sins, and to intercede for their forgiveness and restoration; for he well knew that there must first be a work wrought in their souls to qualify them for returning to their own land and to their city. It is only where divine affections for the people of God exist in the heart, as so markedly exemplified both in Moses and in Paul, as well as in Daniel and in Ezra, that there can be power in intercession on their behalf. And may it not be suggested as present instruction that the urgent need of to-day is that of intercessors? of holy men and women, who, divinely taught and filled with the Spirit, shall be enabled, like Epaphras, to labour fervently for the saints in prayer? And if we ourselves, through lack of zeal for God's glory, and of love for His people, cannot be intercessors, we may at least pray that such may be raised up throughout the whole church of God in every part of the world.

Before considering Daniel's prayer it may be helpful to observe what has been elsewhere pointed out,* that the intercession of the prophet is one of three links in God's ways for the accomplishment of His purposes in respect of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was commissioned to prophecy of her desolation for seventy years on account of her transgressions; Daniel was stirred up by the Spirit of God to pray for her restoration; and finally Cyrus was raised up, "that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled," to issue a proclamation concerning the rebuilding of the Temple. (Ezra i.) God Himself must have the

* In *Ezra*; or, *Restoration from Babylon*.

glory of all His work, and He will not permit any of His servants to claim the credit of that which His own power has executed.

It will not be necessary to make more than a few brief remarks upon the prayer, as its intention, character, and purport are easily apprehended. It should be noted, however, first of all, that Daniel's own state of soul was in correspondence with his confessions and prayers. He says, "I set my face unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." (v. 3.) It is only as we ourselves are truly humbled before God that we can humble ourselves for His people. Through grace, and the power of the Holy Spirit, we must put ourselves morally into the circumstances of those whose case we desire to present to God. The state of the people required prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, and the prophet as one of them, understanding their condition, took this ground in the presence of God. The Lord Himself was the perfect example of this, as when seen in the Psalms confessing His people's sins.* Nothing indeed more plainly exhibits the Spirit of Christ than this complete identification with the sorrowful condition of God's people through their sins. It is thus that saints may bear one another's burdens, and fulfil the law of Him who was the great burden-bearer.

The two prominent features of Daniel's supplications are confession and the justification of God in what He had done in His dealings with His people. In the address to God in verse 4, he lays the basis for justifying God. He says, "O Lord,† the great and dreadful God, keeping

* See as an example of this Psalm lxi. 5.

† The reader may observe the change from "Jehovah, my God" in the first line of the verse to "Adonai" in line three.

the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments." God could not fail in keeping His covenant with His people, and hence the conduct of the people themselves must have been the cause of all the chastisement by which they had been overtaken. And it is this sinful conduct which Daniel now proceeded to specify. "We," he says, "have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments." (*v. 5.*) He offers no palliation of, nor does he seek to extenuate, the enormity of the guilt of his people; but in every variety of expression makes the fullest confession of their manifold transgressions. They had aggravated their sin, moreover, by refusing to listen to the prophets whom God, in His longsuffering and tender mercy, had sent to their kings, their princes, their fathers, and to all the people of the land. (*v. 6.*) The guilt lay alike upon every class. As a consequence, and this Daniel owns, righteousness in His ways with His people, belonged to the Lord, but confusion of face "to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee." (*v. 7.*)

This particularity of confession, taking nothing for granted as already known in the presence of God, may be well commended to us for imitation. It is an infallible sign of the "true heart," of uprightness of soul before God, and hence of a real work of the Holy Spirit in the heart and conscience. But if confusion of face, as Daniel again confesses (*v. 8.*), belonged to every class of the people because of their sins, "to the Lord our God," he proceeds

to say, "belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him," though they had not obeyed His voice through the prophets, and though all Israel had transgressed the law of the Lord their God, and had therefore fallen under the curse and penalty of their sins, as had been written in the law of Moses the servant of God. (*vv.* 9-11.) Daniel in that one sentence, "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses," had reached the only foundation on which he could rest in his intercession. Had he known only the law, he could not have hoped to be heard; but he knew the Lord his God also in the measure of grace in which He had been revealed both to Moses (*Exodus xxxiv.* 6, 7), to David, and to Solomon in connection with the building of the temple on Mount Zion, which was henceforward to be known as the expression of royal grace. (See *1 Chron.* xxi.; *2 Chron.* vi. 36-39.) It was therefore on God as known in grace that the prophet depended; and it is only as grace is known that the heart is enabled to unburden its sins and sorrows in the presence of God.

Daniel will hide nothing, and hence he further says that, while God had only confirmed His words in bringing upon His people so great an evil (and there was never a greater under the whole heaven than that which had been done upon Jerusalem); and while the evil came upon them exactly as written in the law of Moses, "yet," he says, "made we not our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth." (*vv.* 12, 13.) The result of all this evil conduct is now stated: "Therefore hath the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He doeth: for we obeyed not His voice." (*v.* 14.) Yet again he

mentions another aggravation of their guilt—it was against Him who had redeemed them with a mighty hand out of the land of Egypt, and had gotten Himself renown, that they had sinned and done wickedly. (*v.* 15.) Daniel went thus to the very bottom, and viewed all the sins of his people in the light of God's holiness, justifying God, and owning that the judgment which had overtaken Jerusalem, Judah, Israel, kings, princes, and people, was but their righteous due. It is therefore a pattern confession for all time, whether for saints or for sinners, only remembering that grace is now still further known, (see 1 John ii. 1, 2; chap. i. 9); but if further known this is an additional incentive for thoroughness and open-heartedness in confession.

Having confessed the sins and iniquities of his people, Daniel, in the next place, turns to intercession. The form of it is much to be observed. Daniel had fully owned the righteousness of God in the chastisement of His people, and now he appeals to the Lord according to all His righteousness, to turn away His anger and His fury from His city Jerusalem, His holy mountain; and he further pleads that Jerusalem and Jehovah's people, because of their sins and iniquities, were now "a reproach to all that are about us." The prophet was entitled to plead the Lord's righteousness, for Jehovah had put His NAME in the sanctuary built by Solomon; He had moreover accepted Solomon's prayer at its dedication, and He had thus bound Himself to hear the prayers of His people, when humbled before Him by reason of their sins.* Daniel, therefore, in this plea counted on all that Jehovah was as revealed to Israel, and upon His fidelity to His own word. Nothing gives the soul so much courage

* See also Deuteronomy xxx.

as the apprehension of God's righteousness, or so completely sets it at liberty in God's presence. It is very touching also to see the way in which Daniel uses the term, "Thy people." In fact God had written Lo-ammi ("not my people") on Israel, but faith would re-establish the link, and hence it refuses the term of reproach.

The sanctuary in all its desolation is next presented; and the ground of his prayer and supplications that God would cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary, is, "for the Lord's sake," a ground of appeal which could not be refused. In the following verse (18) the subject of his petition is "our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name," and for this he urges yet another plea: "We do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies."

These then are the three pleas Daniel urges before the Lord—His righteousness, His own sake, and His mercies; and having laid these out in His presence, he gathers up all his desires and pours them forth in one last earnest entreaty: "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name" Here was the secret of his strength; he was concerned most of all for the name of his God, and for His interests in His sanctuary, His city, and His people. He has not one single thing to ask for himself, or even for his companions in captivity; but his whole heart goes out in supplication for the honour of the name of his God, and for the interests of God upon the earth. It is a prayer, therefore, which might well be often studied by those who desire, in any measure, to be in fellowship with God's heart concerning the sorrowful condition of His church in the world.

Before Daniel had ended his supplications the answer to his cries was received — in so far as concerned the revelation of the mind of God touching the subjects of his prayer. He says: "And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." (*vv.* 20, 21.) Two remarks may be made before proceeding: first, to remind ourselves anew that God's ear is ever open to the prayers of His people. As John wrote, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us," and it was so in this case. Daniel was in the secret of God's mind, and God delighted in His servant's supplications, every word of which ascended up before Him as sweet incense; for, in truth, they were His own desires which had been begotten in His servant's heart. Secondly, it was at the time of the evening oblation that Gabriel arrived and "touched" Daniel. The evening oblation was the perpetual burnt offering—appointed to be presented morning and evening continually. The temple having been destroyed, it could no longer be offered; but Daniel was before God in the virtue of it; that is, he identified himself in spirit with all its sweet fragrance, as constituting his own acceptance, and the efficacy of his prayers. (Compare 1 Samuel vii. 9, 10; 2 Kings iii. 20.) So is it with our prayers now when, through faith and in the power of the Holy Ghost, we rest wholly and entirely upon what Christ is, and upon all the virtue of His sacrifice, before God.

Gabriel came, first of all, to give Daniel "skill and

understanding" (v. 22); and, moreover, told him "at the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." (v. 23.) The revelation about to be made would need divine intelligence to comprehend it, and this it was that God first imparted, through Gabriel, to His servant. He would have Daniel also know that He had read the desires of his heart, and had, at the beginning of his supplications, given commandment for Gabriel's mission; and in His precious grace, to encourage Daniel's heart, He would also have him informed that he was greatly beloved—beloved, like the disciple whom Jesus loved, as being in the intimacy of the Lord's mind and affections, and thus enabled to receive the impartation of divine secrets. For it is ever true that the nearer we are to the Lord the more fully He can open out His mind to us. Hence Gabriel adds, "Therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." The qualifications were possessed; divine intelligence and a heart in communion with God; and Daniel, thus endowed through grace, was in a position to comprehend the revelation he was about to receive.

This brings us to the most difficult part of the book, or at least to one made difficult through speculation and controversy, viz., the subject of the

SEVENTY WEEKS.

Some preliminary observations will pave the way for its consideration. It is then of the utmost moment to note that the revelation of God's purpose goes a long way beyond the prophet's prayer. Jeremiah had said, "Thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My

good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place." (Chapter xxix. 10; see also chapter xxv. 11-14.) It was these scriptures which Daniel had discovered, and on which he had based his intercession, becoming, as possessing the mind of God, a mediator. Hence it is that, as often observed, he does not go back to God's unconditional covenant with the patriarchs, on the ground of which, in virtue of the death of Christ, He will finally re-establish His people in the land in blessing under the reign of Christ (see Leviticus xxvi. 40-45), but only to the revelation God had made of Himself, and to the promises He gave, to Moses in Exodus xxxiv.* What Daniel sought in his supplications was the fulfilment of the promise made through Jeremiah, and, as led of the Spirit of God, he took the appropriate ground for this in the presence of God. But in the communication made through Gabriel, it is revealed to him that God had still larger thoughts of blessing for His people, which would be surely fulfilled at the end of the seventy weeks.

It must also be borne in mind that this revelation entirely concerns the Jewish people and Jerusalem. It is strange indeed that this should need to be insisted upon, considering the language employed; but the tendency is so persistent in some quarters to explain away, by spiritualizing, the scriptures which have in view the future restoration of the chosen nation, that it becomes necessary to affirm and to hold fast their manifest application. Gabriel thus says to Daniel, "*Thy* people," and "*thy* holy city." Even a child, if he know but the elements of the New Testament, understands that

* In Exodus xxxii. Moses did go back to the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when it was a question of God's utterly consuming His people and making of Moses a nation to take their place.

Christians have no holy city upon earth. And should it be contended that it is the heavenly city, new Jerusalem, which is here indicated, it might well be enquired, When were its walls thrown down, so as to need rebuilding? No, the city prayed for is the city of which Gabriel speaks, as is evident from verse 25; and consequently Daniel's people are the Jews, and his city is the earthly Jerusalem. Remark also that, though Daniel had said to the Lord, "Thy people" and "Thy city" Jerusalem, Gabriel says to him, "thy people" and "thy city." (Compare the intercession of Moses in Exodus xxxii.-xxxiv.) The link with Jehovah had been broken by Israel's sin, and Lo-ammi (*not my people*), as before explained, had been pronounced over them; and from that time, until the appearing of Christ and the restoration of His people, the term "my people" is never used.*

Another thing to determine is the meaning of the expression "weeks"—seventy *weeks*. From familiarity with the term "weeks," and its common use, it might be supposed that a period of seven days was meant; and there have been expositors who have insisted on this theory. The answer is simple and irrefragable. The date of the commencement of the seventy weeks is laid down with the utmost precision (*v.* 25); and starting from this date, was there, it may well be enquired, if seventy weeks of days are signified, any fulfilment of this prediction within the period named? Nay; has there even yet been the accomplishment of Gabriel's revelation? If not, it is proved beyond all question, for those who believe in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, that

* Hence it is never found in Ezra and Nehemiah; but when the Lord once more returns to Zion, He again takes it up. (See Zechariah viii. 7, 8; xiii. 9; Hosea ii. 23.)

“weeks” in this passage are not weeks of days. The following quotations from one whose intimate acquaintance with the Hebrew language none would question, will be helpful in the understanding of the term. He says: “The word itself is strictly, *something divided into*, or consisting of, *seven parts—a heptad, a hebdomad.*” Again, “Daniel had made inquiry about seventy *years* of the captivity in Babylon. The answer speaks also of seventy periods, which in our English translation are called weeks. The word, however, does not necessarily mean seven *days*, but a period of seven parts; of course, it is much more often used in speaking of a week than anything else, because nothing is so often mentioned as a week which is similarly divided. The Hebrews, however, used a septenary scale as to time just as habitually as we should reckon by tens; the sabbatical years, the jubilees, all tended to give this thought a permanent place in their minds. The denomination is here to be taken from the subject of Daniel’s prayer. He prayed about years, he is answered about periods of seven years; *i.e.*, the recurrence of sabbatical years.”*

Having shown that weeks in this scripture signify periods of seven years, our next inquiry must be concerning the date of their commencement. It is stated by Gabriel to be “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.” (v. 25.) In the book of Ezra we have a decree by Cyrus, and another by Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign; but both of these are concerning the house of God in Jerusalem, and hence neither satisfies the terms mentioned by Gabriel. Passing on however to Nehemiah, we find that, “in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes,” he issued letters, in

* S. P. Tregelles, LL.D.

response to Nehemiah's request, commissioning him to go unto Judah, unto the city of his fathers' sepulchres, that he might build it. (Chapter ii.) Here then is the date referred to by Gabriel, and, as there is no other such "commandment" as to the restoration and building of Jerusalem in any part of scripture, the point of time is fixed and certain.

Another question arises as to whether the year in the world's history of this "commandment" can be ascertained.* Without going into the details of the investigation, which can easily be pursued if desired, it may be stated that the twentieth year of Artaxerxes is believed to coincide, as nearly as possible, with 454 or 455 B.C. The application of this date will be seen in considering the several parts of Gabriel's communication.

Taking then verse 24, we have the statement that "seventy weeks (490 years) are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." (Or, the holy of holies.) All these expressions look plainly onward to the full re-establishment of Daniel's people and city in blessing. The transgression will be ended, the transgression for which they have been scattered, Jerusalem having now "received of the Lord's

* The following fact, borrowed from Dr. Tregelles, may be interesting to some readers. Archbishop Ussher's chronology is that adopted in our own English Bibles, and it seems that he paid very special attention to the date of Artaxerxes' reign. "About a hundred and fifty years ago" (nearer two hundred now) Dr. Tregelles says, "Bishop Lloyd undertook to affix Archbishop Ussher's dates to our English Bibles; but, in this instance, he made a considerable alteration, and substituted another date of his own, so as to adapt the reign of Artaxerxes to his own theory!"

hand double for all her sins," their iniquity will be pardoned (Isaiah xl. 2), everlasting righteousness, God's righteousness, will be brought in (Isaiah li. 4-8), visions and prophecies will be closed up for ever (see Zechariah xiii.), and the holy of holies will once more be set apart, sanctified according to the requirements of the glory of Him who will again dwell there. (See Exodus xl. 9.)

In the next verse (25th) the period of seventy weeks is divided: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." The seventy weeks are thus divided into three portions—seven weeks, threescore and two weeks, and one week. The first portion undoubtedly comprises the period occupied in rebuilding Jerusalem and the wall, for the end of the verse expressly speaks of the "troublous," or "strait of," times during which this was performed. In the book of Nehemiah some account is given of the obstacles and opposition which Nehemiah and his builders had to encounter.

Next we have sixty-two weeks, which reach "unto" the Messiah, the Prince. That is, adding the forty-nine years occupied in the restoration of the city, there would be four hundred and eighty-three years until Christ. It must be carefully observed that the expression is general, that neither the birth of Christ, His anointing for His mission, nor His death is specified. It simply says, "unto" Messiah, the Prince. Some taking the date of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem as 454 or 455 B.C., calculate that the 483 years, included in the sixty-nine weeks, terminated with the death of

Christ.* Had the Messiah been received, the Jewish nation would, as we know, have been at once established in the kingdom; and even, had He been received by the nation after the crucifixion, the times of refreshing, as Peter distinctly declares, would have come from the presence of the Lord; and He would have sent Jesus Christ to His people. (Acts iii. 19–21.) But God foreknew all, and hence, after naming the sixty-two weeks, says, “And after† threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and [marginal rendering] shall have nothing.” (v. 26.) It should be noticed that it does not say *immediately* after, only “after,” leaving room, we cannot doubt, for the half week of the Lord’s ministry.

Be that however as it may, the facts mentioned are divinely given, and are therefore indisputable, viz., that sixty-two weeks, dating from the restoration of Jerusalem, ran on till Christ; and that, “after” the termination of this period, He, being rejected, was cut off, and had nothing;

* This calculation takes, what indeed is now commonly accepted, the year 4 B.C. for the birth of Christ and consequently 29 A.D. for His crucifixion. But nothing whatever is gained by this attempt at numerical accuracy; and we cannot but believe that the expression “unto Messiah the Prince” is indefinite, for the reason that the Messiah, as here foretold, would be rejected by those to whom He came. It may be mentioned that some, holding that the sixty-nine weeks end with the birth of Christ, regard the first half of the seventieth week as fulfilled in the ministry of the Baptist, and its second half in the ministry of our Lord, but that, *owing to the rejection of Christ this week is cancelled*, and therefore remains to be gone over again. We see no Scriptural ground whatever for this opinion, for in no possible way can the ministry of John be extended to three years and a half. Another view, for which there is much more to be said, is that the Lord’s ministry embraces the first half of the seventieth week, and hence that only the remaining half is yet to be fulfilled. This view will be more properly discussed in connection with verses 26, 27.

† The article should here be inserted, viz., after *the* sixty-two weeks.

for the kingdom and its glory were as a consequence postponed, and, together with it, the fulfilment of the last portion of the seventy weeks. This will be more clearly seen as we follow the scripture.

In connection then with Messiah's being cut off, it is said: "And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."* (v. 26.) The most careful attention must be given to the exact words used in this scripture if we are to understand their import, and it may help to their elucidation if we recall one or two facts to our minds. We have seen then, in the earlier chapters, that the fourth kingdom, the successor to that of Greece, which is to complete the times of the Gentiles, is Rome; and we have also seen that this has no earthly successor, that it will, in fact, be displaced by the kingdom of the Son of man; and consequently that, though to outward eyes the Western Roman empire may appear to have passed away for ever, it will, according to the teaching of Scripture, be revived (see Rev. xiii. and xvii.), and will assume the form of ten kingdoms, confederated under one imperial head—the little horn of Daniel vii., or the first beast of Rev. xiii. Moreover, it was in the time of the fourth empire, as a well-known fact in history, and testified to in the Scriptures, that the Lord Jesus came into this world, and that it was at Rome's tribunal, with Pilate as judge, that He was sentenced to the death of the cross. These facts have a most important bearing upon the statements of our scripture.

* Another translation of the last clause is, "And until the end [there is] war [even] that which is determined for desolations."

Remark then, first, that it does not say that *a prince* shall come and destroy the city and the sanctuary, but that *the people of the prince that shall come* shall do so. In other words, "the prince that shall come" applies to the future, and is indeed, as will be seen in the next verse, the imperial head of the revived Roman empire in the last days. The "people" are identified with him because they are Romans, of the same kingdom that is yet to reappear, and of which this prince will be the leader and the chief. What we have then, in this passage, is the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans after the death of Christ as God's judgment upon the Jews for their rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah. Our Lord Himself often spoke of this sorrowful event, and always connected it with His own rejection. (See Matt. xxii. 7, Luke xix. 41-44, &c.)

The fearful character of this judgment is pointed out in the closing words of the verse—"The end thereof shall be with a flood, and," adopting the alternative translation given, "until the end," there will be wars for the accomplishment of God's will in the desolations of the holy city; for, as the Lord Himself said, "They [the Jews] shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke xxi. 24; see also Rev. xi. 2.)

It is now apparent why the last of the seventy weeks is separated from the previous sixty-two. Within one week (seven years) when Christ came, the seventy weeks spoken of by Gabriel had run their course; and had the Jews but received Jesus of Nazareth as their promised Messiah, He would have at once established His kingdom, and brought in all the blessings spoken of in verse 24; but they knew

not the time of their visitation. As a consequence the course of the seventy weeks has been interrupted, and God does not count time while His ancient people on earth are out of their inheritance, and scattered over the globe. There is therefore a blank, so to speak, in Jewish history, an interval during which the nation, though still watched over, has no *recognised* relationship with God.* But, blessed be His name, "through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy." (Rom. xi. 11.) For it has pleased God, in the depth of the riches both of His wisdom and of His knowledge, to use this very interval for the unfolding and accomplishment of His eternal counsels in Christ concerning the saints who are to be joint heirs with Christ, and to form His body and His bride. It is precisely this interval, wherein time is not reckoned, which forms the church-period; and when this—the acceptable year of the Lord—is ended, God will again put forth His power for the blessing of the chosen earthly people; and then they will sing with overflowing hearts, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south." (Psalm cvii. 1-3.)

It will be perceived that an immense interval is to be interposed between verses 26 and 27; that verse 26 refers to the death of Christ and God's judgment upon Jerusalem some thirty years after, while verse 27 passes on to a time after the church-period is closed, when

* The bond between God and Israel is maintained during this period through the faith of the remnant, as exemplified in the first part of this book in Daniel and his companions.

the Jews, though in unbelief, will be again in their own land. Should anyone regard this interpretation as forced, he may be reminded that such instances are common in the prophetic scriptures. Peter, for example, in citing from Psalm xxxiv., says, "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil," but he does not add, what is found in the Psalm, "to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," for the reason that since God is now acting in grace, while it is ever true that His face is against them that do evil, He will not cut such off from the earth until the kingdom of Christ is established. In other words, the whole of the present period, the day of grace, has to be inserted between the two clauses of the same verse.*

We may now proceed to consider the opening statement of verse 27, "And he shall confirm the [rather *a*] covenant with many [really *the* many] for one week." The first thing to be decided in this statement is as to who is the person who makes a covenant with the many. Adopting the English translation, "*the* covenant," some have hastily concluded that it is Christ Himself, omitting to notice that the covenant mentioned is only made for seven years. It is now, however, admitted on all hands that the words should be rendered *a* covenant, and this at once shows that it could not be the Messiah. Indeed the proper antecedent of the pronoun "he" is the prince that shall come; and it is to this personage that the reference is made. What is asserted therefore is, that the future head of the revived Roman empire will make a covenant with

* For another remarkable illustration of the same thing the reader may compare Luke iv. 18, 19, with the place in Isaiah whence the words are taken. He will discover that the Lord did not cite "And the day of vengeance of our God," because in fact that day would not come until after the "acceptable year"—that is, the whole period of grace—had run its course.

“the many,” that is, with the mass or majority of the Jews, who at that time will be again in their own land; for the mention of the sacrifice and the oblation puts it beyond doubt that Jerusalem is in question, and that the temple has been rebuilt. This prince will then enter into an alliance with the Jews, with all of them save the godly remnant, professedly as befriending their cause, and as protecting them from their adversaries. And it should be well observed that the term of this covenant is one week—that is, for the seventieth week, as we judge, in respect of the unbelieving Jews. Faith may accept the Lord’s ministry, when on earth, as the first half of this last week, and go on to the time when the prince breaks his covenant with the Jews for the commencement of the last half; but for unbelief the seventieth week is the week for which this covenant is made. Other scriptures allude to this covenant. We thus read in Isaiah xxviii., “Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves,” etc. (*vv.* 14, 15.) It would appear therefore that it will be the fear of another adversary, “the overflowing scourge” (who is no less a personage than the Assyrian, or the king of the north), which will drive these “scornful men” into the arms of the imperial head of the Roman empire. It must also be remembered, as will be seen when chapter xi. is reached, that the Antichrist will at this time have his seat and sway in Jerusalem, and that he will act as the “prophet,” the false prophet to the prince of the empire. (*Rev.* xiii.) It will thus be, as led by him,

that in fear of their terrible adversary, the Assyrian, they will accept the treaty of alliance proposed by the head of the Roman Empire.

At the outset, as we have seen in Isaiah, all will promise well, and the Jews will delude themselves with the thought that they have secured themselves from all possible danger. Shutting God out, they will lean upon the arm of the most powerful monarch of the world. Of whom therefore should they be afraid? But the very one in whom they trust becomes their enemy; for, false to his own covenant, "in the midst of the week" (that is, at the end of three years and a half) "he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease," and more than this, for (we now give what most competent students of Scripture accept as the true sense or rendering of what follows) "*on account of the protection* of idols there is a desolator, and until the consummation that is determined there shall be poured [judgment] upon the desolate.*" Without attempting to unravel the intricacies of this admittedly difficult passage, it may be affirmed that its general sense is quite plain, inasmuch as there is light from other scriptures to guide us as to it.

Not only will this Roman prince cause the daily sacrifices to be removed, but in addition to his own image erected by Antichrist, which will be endowed with seemingly miraculous powers (Rev. xiii.), the Antichrist himself, as we learn from 2 Thess. ii., will as God sit in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. (v. 11.) The Lord Himself refers to this awful fact in Matthew xxiv., where He speaks of the abomination of

* The word translated "protection" is literally "wing"; but every reader of the Bible knows that "wing" is continually a symbol of protection.

desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, as to be set up in the holy place, referring to chapter xii. 11.

The situation then will be thus: The Jews at this time will have returned to their own land, and, though in unbelief as to the mass, they will have rebuilt the temple and restored the temple services. Antichrist, according to the Lord's prediction, having come in his own name, will be received as their king; and, under his leadership, when threatened by the power of the Assyrian, they will enter into a covenant, and make a treaty, with the head of the western empire. This prince breaks his covenant, as we have seen, and "in the midst of the week" abolishes the temple services; and, with daring profanity, the Antichrist, as his prophet, causes an image of himself to be erected in the holy of holies, and demands that divine honours should be rendered to himself instead of to Jehovah.

We have repeated these facts because that, *from this point*, the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the holy place, *commences the last half of the seventieth prophetic week*. This is the beginning of the "time and times and the dividing of time" of chapter vii. 25, and of the forty-two months, or the 1260 days of the book of Revelation, that is of the three years and a half—the last half of the seventieth week. It is of this period our blessed Lord speaks in Matthew xxiv. as a time of unequalled sorrow, saying, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved" (vv. 21, 22); for it is during these days that the trumpet judgments, and "the vials of the wrath of God," of which we read in Revelation, are poured out on the earth.

It is to these judgments, as affecting Jerusalem and the Jews, that allusion is made in the verse in Daniel which we are considering.

First, then, it says, according to the amended translation given: "On account of the protection of idols there is a desolator." The desolator here is undoubtedly the "overflowing scourge" of Isaiah xxviii.; for, as before seen, the Jews are led by antichrist to form a treaty with the head of the Roman empire to protect themselves from their northern adversary; and the "scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem," boast of their security. But, says the prophet, "your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." (Isaiah xxviii. 18; see also *vv.* 19-22.) In fact, God uses the Assyrian as a rod to break the guilty people to pieces, twice guilty—in rejecting Christ and in again accepting idolatry after the house had been swept and garnished.

There is yet more, for "until the consummation that is determined, there shall be poured [judgment] on the desolate."* Commencing then with the overflowing scourge the Jews will be the objects of unceasing judgment, and Jerusalem will be given up to the fury of her oppressors. As another has said, "the consummation that is determined" is an expression constantly used

* There has been much discussion as to whether this word "desolate" should not be translated "desolator." It is admitted that it will bear both meanings, although the former is the more common rendering. Whichever is adopted the sense remains much the same, excepting that, if "desolate" be retained, Jerusalem is signified, whereas if "desolator" be preferred her adversary is indicated. The meaning in either case is that from the time mentioned increasing judgment will be poured out until "the consummation that is determined."

for the last judgments that shall fall upon the Jews. (See Isaiah x. 22; xxviii. 22.) As these will come before us towards the close of the book, further consideration of them now may be deferred, only remarking that at the close of this night of tribulation their Messiah will appear, and “will destroy in this mountain (Zion) the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.” (Isaiah xxv. 7, 8.)

CHAPTER X.

IT is apparent to the most casual reader that the last three chapters of this book form, so to speak, but one prophecy. It deals, however, with different eras and personages, traverses many spheres of action, but it does not proceed consecutively; for after reaching down to a certain point, with a historical description of machinations and conflicts between the king of the north and the king of the south, it suddenly passes on to the time of the end, and brings before us the "wilful king," the antichrist, together with his wicked doings (xi. 36, &c.) and his conflicts with his adversaries. The last chapter is entirely taken up with the Jews, having especially in view the faithful remnant, the "time of trouble" through which they will pass during the last days of Gentile rule, and their glorious deliverance.

The chapter now before us is occupied mainly with the circumstances under which Daniel received these last communications; and with respect to these it has been well observed, "that in both cases (chap. ix. and chaps. x.-xii.) the revelation given to Daniel, as to his people, is in reply to his exercises of heart in intercession or fasting; [whereas] the revelations in chapters vii., viii. as to the western or eastern destroying powers are not. They are given when God pleases. These were in the time of Belshazzar; the two former after Babylon was taken."* The date of the vision is given in verse 1. It was in the

* *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, by J. N. Darby, vol. ii. p. 451. New edition. Revised.

third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, the king who succeeded, it will be remembered, Darius the Mede, during whose reign Daniel was cast into the den of lions. As expressly said, the thing revealed was "true, but the time appointed" (appointed for the fulfilment of all the events, or of the last of them, which had been unfolded in the prophetic vision) "was long; and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision." If God thus used the prophet as a vessel for the revelation of the future, He also gave him to understand what was revealed.

The circumstances under which the vision was vouchsafed are next given: "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." (*vv.* 2, 3.) The subject of his sorrow and fasting is not stated; but as we know from the previous chapter that the condition of his people and of the holy city lay heavily upon his heart, we may well conclude that his mourning here was on account of the same thing, and the more certainly in that it led to a revelation of the future deliverance of his people. For our own instruction, two observations may be made: First, that he who most completely identifies himself with the sorrows of God's people is most in fellowship with the heart of God for them (compare Isaiah liii. 4, 5.); and, secondly, that if we would have the mind of God communicated to us we must be in a state of soul to receive it. What greater mistake can be made than to suppose that we can enter into God's secrets without a moral preparedness of heart, or to think that it is possible to understand divine things merely through hearing or reading, or

because we have ranged ourselves round certain leaders of God's people, and enthusiastically uphold their teachings? Humiliation and fasting were Daniel's means of receiving these revelations; and so now, it is only when we are morally outside of things here—outside of the gratification of the senses and of the joys of earth, having thoroughly chastened ourselves, through the application of the cross, in the presence of God—that the Spirit of God enlightens the eyes of our hearts to comprehend God's mind and will. These two verses, therefore, may be regarded as most important, containing as they do the means by which Daniel was prepared to hear and to understand the divine voice.

Other particulars concerning time and place are added: "And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel; * then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked," &c. (*vv.* 4, 5.) At this date, then, and at this place, the vision of "a certain man" is granted to him, and the various features of his dress and appearance are described. He was clothed in fine linen; his loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz; his body also was like the beryl; his face as the appearance of lightning; his eyes as lamps of fire; his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass; and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. (*vv.* 5, 6.)

Who, then, was this heavenly visitant? That there are many resemblances to the appearance of the one "like the Son of man," whom John saw in Patmos, is at once perceived; but there are also differences, and there is the

* This river is only mentioned by name in one other place. (*Gen.* ii. 14.) It is generally identified, both from geographical and etymological considerations, with the Tigris. If this be correct, Daniel would have to cross it on his journeys to Shushan (*chap.* viii. 2) from Babylon.

absence of some of the most striking characteristics that John records. It is by no means certain, therefore, that this is a divine personage. Indeed, if it is the same speaker throughout this chapter, it could not be, since he speaks of being hindered in his mission by "the prince of Persia" for one and twenty days.*

The effect upon Daniel and his companions, the men that were with him, of whom we read here for the first time,† combines in some particulars the effects produced on Paul's attendants when on his way to Damascus, as the light from heaven, beyond the brightness of the mid-day sun, shone round about him; and those produced on John when he saw, while at Patmos, the vision of the Son of man. Daniel's companions, like those of Paul, were afraid, and so great was the "quaking" that fell upon them that they fled to hide themselves; and Daniel himself, like John, fell down as dead before the celestial messenger. He says, "There remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground." (v. 8, 9.) It would seem impossible, from many instances in Scripture, for man in nature to hold converse with heavenly beings *when surrounded with the majesty and excellency that pertain to their existence*; and hence it is necessary to be like Paul, whether in the body or out of

* Some have supposed that it is a divine person in verses 5-9, and an angel from verse 10. This seems a little forced, although there are traits in verses 5-9 that might suggest that it was more than an angel. Nothing, however, depends upon the interpretation, and the question may therefore be left undecided.

† This would seem to point to the conclusion that Daniel was at this time on a journey, and that the men were his personal attendants.

the body he knew not, or like John "in the Spirit," rapt outside of his ordinary mode of being, in order to become the recipient of heavenly secrets. Three things were bestowed upon Daniel before the angel proceeded with his communication: First, "an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands." Divine strength was imparted to him. Secondly, he receives the assurance that he was "a man greatly beloved," an object of the divine affections; and, together with this, and indeed in the power of it, he is commanded to understand the words spoken to him, and to stand upright; for, said the angel, "Unto thee am I now sent." (v. 11.) Then, lastly, he is set at liberty. In response to the command to stand upright, he "stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel." He was thus calmed in the presence of the heavenly messenger, his fears having been dissipated, and so qualified to become the depository of the angel's message. The angel then revealed to him that he had come in answer to his prayer: "From the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." (v. 12.) What gracious encouragement is thus ministered to the intercessors in all ages for the people of God! They may be alone in the midst of the prevailing confusion and corruption; they may even have their names cast out as evil by professing Christians, and by real believers; but their cries are heard by God, and He will sustain them by the assurances of His love, comfort them by the consolations which He alone can minister, and in due time answer their prayers.

But, as the angel goes on to inform the prophet, there may be, nay, there will be, antagonistic forces at work to

hinder the divine response to the supplications of His servants; and hereby is revealed to us one of the profoundest mysteries of the spiritual world. "The prince of the kingdom of Persia," the angel informs Daniel, "withstood me one and twenty days" (v. 13); that is, during the whole time of Daniel's fasting and prayer. The words of the prophet were heard "from the first day"; and the angel was sent, but this "prince of the kingdom of Persia" in some way or other interposed an obstacle for the period of three weeks. While careful not to go beyond what is written, nor to penetrate into what is not revealed, a few words will be required for the elucidation of this mysterious revelation.

In the first place, it must be observed that "the prince of the kingdom of Persia" is an angel; for Michael, termed in the same verse "one of the chief princes," and in chapter xii. "the great prince" in connection with Israel, is known, on the authority of Jude, to be the archangel. If so, inasmuch as this "prince" of Persia is seen here acting in opposition to the mind of God, he is a bad angel, in fact, one of Satan's princes. This will help us to understand what we find often mentioned in the New Testament, viz., that there are good principalities and powers (Ephes. i. 21; Col. i. 16, ii. 10; 1 Peter iii. 22), and bad principalities and powers. (Rom. viii. 38; Ephes. vi. 12, etc.) It would seem, therefore, that Satan has imitated the kingdom of God,* and formed his gradations of rank and power according to the divine model. Having therefore seen that God had appointed the archangel Michael to watch over the interests of Israel in His providential government, Satan sent one of his angels to

* We use the term "kingdom of God" in this place as expressive of the whole sphere of God's authority and rule.

care for his interests in Persia, which at this time held the sovereignty of the earth, and consequently to frustrate, wherever possible, the activities of God upon the earth. In how far this mode of operation may continue during the day of grace we are not distinctly informed. We do find, however, that the Lord, during His sojourn on the earth, referred to the angels of little children, that Peter was delivered from prison through the instrumentality of an angel, that angels are "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation"; and it is plain from chapter xii. that Michael's office continues to the end. And in regard to evil spirits or angels, we learn from Ephesians that their activities and energy are ceaseless (see chaps. ii. 2; vi. 12) against the children of God. Moreover Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, says expressly, "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us." (1 Thess. ii. 18.) We have, therefore, to count, when walking in God's ways and doing His will, upon the incessant and malevolent opposition of the Evil One through his emissaries; and it is to our loss when we forget this character of the enemy of God and of our souls, for we forget with it our need of being clothed with the panoply of God, and of constant vigilance against Satan's devices.

It is an encouragement, however, to learn from this scripture that we are not left to ourselves; for if Satan's prince was seeking to hinder the answer to Daniel's supplications, Michael, one of God's chief princes, came to help His messenger; and he "remained there with the kings of Persia," victorious, through Michael's succour, over the wicked agent who had daringly thrust himself between the command of God and its execution.

The next verse (14th) affords the key to the communication about to be made. The angel says, "Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days." Much of what he is about to impart relates, as we shall see, to what took place during the time of the third kingdom, the time of Alexander's successors; but even this is given such prominence because of its typical foreshadowings. The object of the angel's communication was to make the prophet know what should befall his people *in the latter days*; and unless this is borne in mind, it is impossible to read aright these prophetic intimations. It is from want of attention to such words as these, which open out to us the import of the prophecy, that so many mistakes have been made.

Daniel once again is overcome by the revelations made to him concerning the conflicts in the spiritual world in connection with his people. He set his face toward the ground, and he became dumb. (*v.* 15.) But if the human vessel was too weak in itself to utter the thoughts that arose in his heart, divine help was at hand. "One like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength." Both his strength and his breath, as he proceeds to say, had departed. The vessel, as said before, could scarcely bear the strain of the contents of the vision; and in this way the Lord would teach His servant his utter weakness, that he might learn that His strength is made perfect in weakness. Hence, as soon as Daniel owned that no more strength remained in him, "there came again and touched me one like the

appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong." (*vv.* 18, 19.) This is exceedingly beautiful, showing us that the Lord expects nothing from us, except looking to Him, and even for that He will give the power. Strength, the sense of His love, calm, peace, yea, and double strength, are all bestowed on Daniel to qualify him for the service to which he was called. Who, indeed, ever goeth to warfare at his own charges? No; He who calls, equips, and sustains; and the servant has only to learn how to avail himself of what is provided. The effect on Daniel was immediate; he "was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me." (*v.* 19.)

The last two verses need attentive examination to understand their force and bearing. After the angel had asked, "Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee?" he continued, "and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth." (*vv.* 20, 21.) If we understand rightly, the last clause means that before the angel goes forth against the prince of Persia, he will communicate to Daniel his message, the contents, that is, of chapters xi. xii. This makes all plain. Then, if the prince of Persia signifies a Satanic angel, as already explained, so will also the prince of Grecia, although we are not told for what purpose he will appear on the scene, excepting that we know it must be in hostility to God's people. The reason of the special antagonism of "the prince of Persia" may be easily discerned. Persia was the kingdom in power at this moment, and consequently held the people of God in captivity. As influenced by

Satan's prince, apart from natural reasons, Persia would be the enemy of Daniel and his people, whatever the toleration of its rule. It would be interested in retaining them in subjection; and remembering this, one can the better understand the necessity of the conflict of which the angel speaks. Before, however, he departed, he would communicate, by divine direction, the history of the future with its issue in the full accomplishment of God's purposes for His earthly people. And then he adds, "There is none that holdeth with me in these things* but Michael your prince." (v. 21.) Satan was thus even then, though it had not yet been demonstrated, the god of the world; and his angels had supreme influence with the various governments that swayed the nations, so that *on earth* there was not one to stand by and assist this angel in his conflict with Satan's agents, excepting the archangel that cared for, in the way of providential government, the interests of the elect nation.

* Some translate "against them," that is, against the "prince" of Persia and the "prince" of Grecia. If the rendering "in these things" be retained, the meaning will be the objects for which the angel was contending.

CHAPTER XI.

AS before observed, chapters x.–xii. form one continuous revelation or prophecy; and it will be seen that the whole of chapter x., together with the first verse of chapter xi., is introductory, containing the account of the circumstances under which the revelation was made, and the exercises of the prophet which God used to produce his moral fitness to receive these divine unfoldings of the future. Down to the end of verse 35, it may be repeated, we have a narrative of events which were to take place in connection with the kingdoms into which “Grecia” was divided after the death of Alexander the Great; and these are chosen because they bring before us two monarchs, the king of the North, and the king of the South (so denominated because of the geographical position of their respective territories in relation to the “glorious land”), who are themselves foreshadowings of the adversaries of the Jews in the last days. Their actings, as here described, have now long since passed away; but their prophetic significance remains, or they would have no possible interest for the reader, except in so far as they reveal the divine prescience, as also God’s care over His people, even while, as a people, they are unfaithful to Him and to His word.

In the first verse a remarkable revelation is made. Every one must be struck, in reading chapter vi., with the earnestness of Darius in espousing Daniel’s cause, and in

seeking his deliverance from the devices of his enemies. The secret of this is now discovered, illustrating the fact that God holds the hearts of all men in His hands, and turns them whithersoever He will in pursuance of His purposes. "Also I," said the angel to Daniel, "in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him." Darius knew it not; but the fact is now made known that there was a divine influence secretly working to confirm him in a certain course, and to strengthen him against those who were plotting against God's witness in the king's court. Well may we learn from this to look away from all secondary causes, and to rest in the assurance that God is silently working towards His proposed end through all the apparent confusion of human designs, and in the face of all the demonstrated power of the enemy.

The next three verses (*vv.* 2-4) give a brief outline of those near events which would form the foundation of the subsequent developments which the Spirit of God was about to trace. First, four kings of Persia were yet to arise; "the fourth shall be far richer than they all." Three of these (the first three) are mentioned in *Ezra* iv., Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, and Darius.* The fourth was the famous Xerxes, who, "by his strength through his riches," stirred up "all against the realm of Grecia." The overwhelming defeat of his motley host, and the subsequent invasion and conquest of his kingdom by Alexander—facts well known to every reader of history, and alluded to in chapter viii. 7—are here passed over, and Alexander, as

* This is not, it should be remarked, Darius the Mede of verse 1, but *Darius Hystaspes*, as he is known in history. Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes are supposed to be the monarchs designated by profane writers as *Cambyses* and *Smerdis*.

a "mighty king," is at once introduced—one "that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will." (v. 3.)

We are next told, that "when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those." (v. 4.) The devout believer in the inspired word of God will not need to be told that this is an accurate description in every particular of what took place on the death of Alexander—so accurate, indeed, that the unbeliever can only account for it by maintaining that it was written subsequently to the event! The ingenuity of infidelity to escape the evidence that God has spoken to man in His word, and that the future all lies before his gaze, is simply astounding. The suppositions of unbelief are readily received and circulated as facts; but the verities of the divine record are rejected with contempt. And who is the loser? Surely the man who, in the pride of his fancied self-sufficiency, shuts his eyes against the light. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.

To return, it is well known (the facts have been before stated) that on the death of this "mighty king," after various contentions and conflicts, his kingdom was "divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity," but by four of his generals. Two of these kingdoms soon disappeared; and two remained till about 50 B.C. ;* and these are the two under the appellations of the "king of the south" and the "king of the north" that

* To speak more accurately, the Syrian kingdom only continued till 65 B.C., but that of Egypt was not extinguished until 51 B.C.

are found in this narrative.* One thing must be borne in mind in following the narrative, and that is that the king of the north and the king of the south do not always designate the same persons. They are titles (like Pharaoh, for example), and thus apply to all the monarchs of the same line. If therefore one king of the north have died, his successor will bear the same designation. This will be readily understood.

The first of these monarchs, to which our attention is directed, is the king of the south—that is Egypt, as seen from verse 8. He is characterised by strength; but there is another “strong above him,”† and “his dominion shall be a great dominion.” (v. 5.)

The monarchs are now in their places, south and north of Palestine; and next we have a record of their relationships and conflicts. It will not be necessary, however, to consider these in all their details: it will suffice to indicate the outline of the occurrences here presented.‡

We read in verse 6 that “in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king’s daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement,” etc. This was strictly fulfilled; for on a quarrel having ensued between the immediate

* These represent the two famous dynasties of the Ptolemies (Egypt), and the Seleucidæ (Syria). For a chronological table of the respective monarchs of these dynasties see Elliott’s *Horæ Apocalyptice*, vol. iv. p. 57. Fourth edition.

† It is not necessary to discuss the translation; it will suffice to state that in the opinion of most this sentence applies to the king of the north; and that we have here the founders of their respective dynasties, viz., Ptolemy and Seleucus, two of the four who succeeded to Alexander’s kingdom.

‡ If the reader desire to study the details he can consult the histories of the period, especially *1 Maccabees*, the articles in Smith’s *Bible Dictionary* under the headings of *Syria*, *Alexander*, *Seleucus*, *Antiochus*, *Ptolemy*, etc.; *Josephus*, etc.

successors of the first Greek kings of Syria and Egypt, amity was sought to be restored by the king of Egypt giving his daughter (Berenice) in marriage to the king of the north. But, as it is here said, "she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times," so it happened; for this queen (Berenice), together with her husband (the king of the north), her son, and her attendants, were murdered; and in this way the devised means of amity became the ground of future dissensions and conflicts.* The next three verses (7-9) give the description of the avenging of the murder of Berenice by one out of a branch of her "roots," another king of the south, who invaded Syria, entered "into the fortress of the king of the north," and prevailed. (v. 7.) In fact his victory was complete, and he extended his conquests as far as Antioch, and eastwards to Babylon, and returned to Egypt in triumph with great spoil of gods and treasures, as recounted in verse 8. "So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land." (v. 9.) †

It is plain from the context that the term "his sons," in verse 10, applies to the successors of the king of the north who had been overcome by Ptolemy III.; and in fact the two next kings of the north ‡ did attack Egypt with large forces, but were unsuccessful; and the latter of

* For the authority of these statements see Elliott's *Horæ Apocalypctica*, vol. iv. pp. 59 *et seq.* (4th edition), and Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, under the title *Ptolemy*.

† The name of this king of the south was *Ptolemy III.*, known also by the title *Euergetes* (Benefactor), which he either assumed or received.

‡ These were, first, *Seleucus Ceraunus*, who only reigned a year or two: and, secondly, his brother and successor, *Antiochus the Great*.

the two suffered a most disastrous defeat, according to the prediction in verse 11, "the multitude [the army of the king of the north] shall be given into his hand" (into the hand of the king of the south—Egypt). But, as we read in verse 12, the king of Egypt did not profit by his victory,* for his heart was lifted up, and although he cast down many ten thousands, he was not strengthened by it. The reason is given in verse 13, which tells us that "the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches." (v. 13.) Many others also shall "stand up against the king of the south"; and in addition to these another class is named, "the robbers of thy people" (that is, of Daniel's people), who are said to "exalt themselves to establish the vision," to verify the divine word, "but they shall fall." (v. 14.)

All this, it is almost needless to remark, exactly happened; for Antiochus the Great, and Philip III. of Macedonia, formed a league, with others, against Egypt, and many of the Jewish insurrectionists and professed patriots, "the robbers of thy people," threw off, at the same time, their allegiance to Egypt. The issue of this combination against the king of the south is stated in the next verse (15). Antiochus and his allies conquered "the most fenced cities," took possession of the whole of Judea, and decisively defeated the Egyptian army. He did therefore according to his own will, and none was able to stand before him (v. 16); and thereon it is said, "He shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed." The glorious land is Palestine, and

* The battle by which this victory was won is known by the name of Raphia, and the king who won it was Ptolemy Philopator.

the allusion is to some action of the king of the north in respect of the Holy Land. It is maintained by some that the word "consumed" should be "perfected"; and it seems established that the king of the north on this occasion did act as a friend to the Jews, and assisted in the completion or beautifying of the temple.

This however is of little moment, but the circumstance serves to call attention to the special object of the narration of the conflicts of these rival sovereigns. *They are given in such detail because of their bearing upon the Jews and the glorious land.* This will be understood when the geographical position of Palestine in relation to Syria and Egypt is recalled. It lay between them, and consequently formed the highway of approach from either country. The armies of the two hostile countries were therefore, in their mutual invasions, continually marching through the land; and, moreover, Judæa was possessed by the monarch who for the moment was victorious. Palestine was thus largely the battle-field, as constituting the outpost of the territory of both kingdoms. God could not be indifferent to this as affecting the welfare of His poor people who had returned from Babylon; and hence it is that the Spirit of God has caused the account of all these wars to be recorded. It shows us the intensity of God's love for His people, whatever their state; and teaches us likewise that He regards the movement of nations as affecting their interests.

The next section (*vv.* 17-19) contains the subsequent doings of this king of the north, and the account of his death. First of all he meditated another attack on Egypt; but, changing his mind, he formed an alliance with the king of the south, giving him his daughter to wife, in order to secure his own influence in the

Egyptian court. What is meant by "corrupting her" is, that he desired her to act in his own interests rather than in those of her husband; but she, in this respect a true woman, clave to her husband. Having, as he supposed, made all secure in Egypt by the marriage, he proceeded, according to a design that he had formed, to attack "the isles"—the isles of Greece—and took many; and here his career of victory ended. "A prince" appeared on the scene, a Roman commander, for the Roman Republic was in alliance with Greece, and attacked and defeated him in two decisive battles, and compelled him to cede to his victors the western half of his empire, besides imposing upon him the payment of an immense tribute.* In order to obtain the means of paying this tribute the king of the north made an expedition against a rich temple, and was killed while attempting to plunder it; according to the prediction "He shall stumble and fall, and not be found." (v. 19.)

His successor, "a raiser of taxes" (v. 20), seeking to raise the Roman tribute, plundered the temple at Jerusalem, and, "within few days," he was destroyed, "neither in anger, nor in battle," the very man he had employed to despoil the temple being the instrument of his assassination.

We arrive now at the advent of a monarch, yet "a vile person" (v. 21), who has been specially chosen as the type of the Assyrian, or the king of the north, of the last days. It is for this reason that his career is given with such detail, occupying the whole paragraph contained in verses 21-35. This "vile person" is known in history as Antiochus Epiphanes, and he commenced his reign about 175 B.C. He was not given "the honour of the kingdom,"

* See Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, vol. i., p. 74.

for he was not the rightful heir; but "he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries," and he fulfilled this description to the letter. Having established himself in the kingdom, his various actings are narrated, his successes, deceit, and increasing strength, the enlargement of his territory, and his reckless prodigality. (*vv.* 22-24.) Then, like his predecessors, he proceeded on an expedition against the king of the south, and, aided by treachery in his enemy's court and camp, he utterly defeated him.* A treaty would seem to be formed according to verse 27, both sovereigns, under the mask of friendship, concealing treachery in their hearts — "they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed." Having settled his affairs for the moment with the king of Egypt, he returned to his kingdom "with great riches"; and now his enmity against the "holy covenant," that is against the Jewish religion, the covenant of God with His people, was in some way manifested; "and" it is added, "he shall do [exploits], and return to his own land." (*v.* 28.) It is said that on his homeward march he attacked Jerusalem, massacred thousands of its inhabitants, and profaned the temple, because of the insurrection of the Jews on a false report of his death.†

In the following verse (29) we read that "at the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south." By "the time appointed," as we understand, is meant, as stated in verse 27, the time fixed by God for the termina-

* It is said that he made four expeditions against Egypt, in the years B.C. 171, 170, 169, 168, but two only are mentioned in the sacred narrative, unless indeed three are found in verse 29, and these are evidently chosen because of the consequences in regard to the Jews.

† See 1 Maccabees i. 21-24.

tion of the deceitful alliance which this monarch had made with the king of the south. It was not to prosper, and accordingly Antiochus, in defiance of his treaty obligations, returned in hostility towards his ally; "but," as Daniel was told, "it shall not be as the former or as the latter." On these previous occasions he had prospered in his designs; but now another power steps forward (the power that was soon, as the fourth prophetic kingdom, to succeed to that of "Grecia" in the government of the world) and checks his victorious career. "For the ships of Chittim shall come against him" (*v.* 30), the ships of Italy, which is the country designated in Scripture as Chittim, a fleet, in fact, of the Roman republic. Forbidden by the Roman consul to pursue his objects in Egypt, and impotent in the presence of such an enemy, he was compelled to return. His state of mind consequent upon having his prey snatched from his grasp is thus described: "Therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant." (*v.* 30.)

We have now reached the main object of the foregoing recital of what are now historical facts, related by the angel long before they occurred, demonstrating, it may once more be affirmed, both the presence of God and the character of inspiration. It is the habit of the present day to seek among ancient ruins and antique inscriptions and tablets for confirmation of the Bible records. It seems to be forgotten that God is not dependent on man for the authentication of the revelation He has made, and that if the word of God is not its own witness (see John iii. 33) no amount of human evidence will establish it as such in the soul. Besides, the facts adduced, and the translations made from ancient cylinders and monuments assume a very different aspect and importance

according to the views of the various interpreters. But accepting the Bible as the veritable word of God, and maintaining therefore its absolute "inerrancy" (to borrow a new theological term) where there is no dispute as to readings or translation, we have an infallible guide, a trustworthy standard of appeal, and thus the certainty that the events predicted must have a real and actual fulfilment, and that the historical facts recorded are given with the most truthful accuracy. It is of all moment, if we would understand the divine records, that we should begin with an undoubting faith in the infallibility of Scripture.

From the middle of verse 30 to the end of verse 35 we have the account of the actings of Antiochus in Jerusalem and the glorious land—actings so diabolical, when estimated according to God, that, as has been observed more than once, he is selected as a type of the powerful enemy of Israel in the last days; and perhaps even more than their last enemy the Assyrian, for he seems to concentrate in himself almost every element of hostility and profanity that will be found in the two beasts of Revelation xiii. as well as in the king of the north.

We are told in the first place that he shall "have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do"; that is, we apprehend, that he acted according to his indignation against the Jews and the holy covenant. Moreover, he had an understanding ("intelligence") with the apostate Jews. The account of his doings may be gleaned from 1, 2 Maccabees, whence it is to be gathered that he resolutely set himself to work to heathenize the Jews, and indeed, like Nebuchadnezzar in chapter iii., to unify his dominions by compelling all his subjects to worship the same false gods. That he largely succeeded among

the Jews is seen from this prophetic narrative. Apostates are specified in verses 30 and 32.

In pursuance of his objects the temple would of necessity be in his way, and call forth his deadliest hostility; and verse 31 describes his conduct in regard to it. It says, "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily [sacrifice], and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." (v. 31.) This is referred to in 1 Maccabees in the following words: "The king had sent letters by messengers unto Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, that they should follow the strange laws of the land, and forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the temple; and that they should profane the sabbaths and festival days: and pollute the sanctuary and holy people: set up altars, and groves, and chapels of idols, and sacrifice swine's flesh, and unclean beasts . . . to the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances." And further we read that on "the fifteenth day of the month Casleu, in the hundred forty and fifth year, they set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar"; and that on "the five and twentieth day of the month they did sacrifice upon the idol altar, which was upon the altar of God." (Chapter i. 44-59.) From other sources we learn that the worship Antiochus enjoined in the place of that of the God of heaven, Jehovah, was that of Jupiter Olympius.

These facts will enable the reader to understand verse 30, and the fearful character of the doings, the profanity and wickedness, of this king of the north; and also the sufferings entailed by his conduct upon those of the Jews who remained faithful to their God and to His word. Some, "such as do wickedly against the covenant," he

corrupted by flatteries; but God preserved a faithful remnant, and these knowing their God, were strong, and did exploits. (*v.* 32.) In the next verse a smaller class are introduced to our notice—"they that understand among the people." Thus there were, we apprehend, three classes of Jews; first, the mass who were corrupted by flatteries; secondly, the faithful remnant, who refused to renounce their observance of the law of their God; and lastly, some among the remnant who, as taught of God, were able to instruct them in the word, and to encourage them in the path of fidelity, whatever the persecution to which they might be subjected. This class is again mentioned in chapter xii. 3, and those who compose it are termed "the Maschilim." It was against this class, those who were publicly identified with God's testimony on the earth, that Satan's enmity was specially directed; and, as a consequence, the angel says, "Yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days." (*v.* 33.) The reader of Revelation will recall the similar experiences there recorded. (See chapters xi. xii. 17; xiii. xiv. 12, 13, etc.)

But they are not left wholly in the hands of the enemy, for "when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries." (*v.* 34.) It could scarcely be otherwise than that, in this prophetic narration, there should be a very distinct allusion to the uprising, and valiant resistance of the Maccabees against the cruelties and profanity of their oppressor. For there was, at least at the commencement of their rebellion, undoubted zeal for God, for His temple and for His law; and the success vouchsafed to them was great. For years they stemmed the tide of the

whole power of the king of the north, and maintained, through victory after victory, their just and holy cause. All this is now a matter of history, and it is only recalled here as explanatory of the last clause of verse 34—"Many shall cleave to them with flatteries"—for subsequently to the reign of Antiochus, when Syria was torn asunder by faction and intestine discords, the Maccabean leaders were as often courted as threatened.

But the reader may be reminded that while this is history, it is not only history. Antiochus himself, as again and again pointed out, is a typical personage, and many of the events connected with his reign, and especially his actings in Jerusalem, are typical, so that many of these things will be reproduced at the close. Two illustrations of this may be offered. Antiochus caused "the abomination that maketh desolate" to be set up in the temple; in chapter xii. 11 we learn that this act will be repeated in a future day. Consequently our Lord quotes from chapter xii. in Matthew xxiv. because He is there speaking of what had not yet taken place. If this distinction had been more accurately observed, fewer mistakes would have been made in the interpretation of these prophetic scriptures. Then again take verse 35, where we read that God will allow "some of them of understanding" to fall to try the faith and "to purge" the remnant, and "to make them white, even to the time of the end," &c.; the very language used shows that what took place then is given as a sample of a similar thing in the last days. Thus in Revelation xiv., after the annunciation of judgment upon those who shall worship the beast and his image, &c., the remnant are described; and it is then the command comes from heaven, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the

Lord," &c. (*vv.* 9-13; compare chap. xiii. 5-15.) If, therefore, anyone has been tempted to enquire, while reading this chapter, What advantage is there in these historical details? the answer is, that God has allowed things to be rehearsed, as it were, in preparation for what will be seen in the time of the end. There are very few purely historical events in Scripture for the reason we have given, that the histories recorded are in themselves typical and prophetic. It is an immense thing, an immense help to the study of the Scriptures, when this principle is understood.*

We pass now to another section of the chapter, for there is a break between verses 35, 36. Up to verse 35 we have, in prophetic form, a relation of what, though future in Daniel's day, has now long since been accomplished; from verse 36 we have the account of what is entirely future. The proof of this, it may be at once said, lies in two sentences. In verse 36 we read that the king "shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished"; and in verse 40 we are told that the event there given is "at the time of the end." It has already been observed, as to the former expression, that it is used in Isaiah of God's last indignation, by means of the Assyrian, against His people in the land before the appearing of Christ. If the reader attentively considers Isaiah x. 20-25, xxviii. 16-22, he cannot fail to be convinced of the truth of this interpretation. The latter expression, "the time of the end," may be thought to be more general, because it is also found in verse 35; but

* It should also be borne in mind that these revelations were for the guidance and comfort of the Jews during the time of these wars between Syria and Egypt, as well as for the instruction of the godly remnant in the last days.

even with regard to the use of it there, the typical significance of what is related must be borne in mind. Another thing will appear as we proceed, viz., the correspondence of the king here described with the "man of sin," or the antichrist of the New Testament. On these grounds we cannot doubt that an immense interval lies between verses 35, 36, and this conclusion will be further strengthened by many of the events found in this closing section of the chapter.

The characteristics and doings of "the king" are given with some particularity. First of all it is said, "The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods," etc. (v. 36.) The appellation of the "wilful king" is derived from this scripture, expressive of the fact here stated, that his own will is his only law. He will be the incarnation and manifestation of all that is evil in man. Adam in the garden of Eden fell through disobedience, doing his own will instead of God's, and through the desire, at the temptation of Satan, to exalt himself; and these two things will reach their further expression in this wilful king, who will claim, in the height of his presumptuous folly, to suffice for himself, to be both independent of God and absolute in power. He will be consequently the perfect contrast, morally, to Christ, who, being in the form of God, did not think it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, and having taken upon Him the form of a servant, humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This man will assert his superiority over every god, and will moreover speak marvellous things against the God of gods. This last feature savours of what in chapter vii. and in Revelation

xiii. is ascribed to the imperial head of the revived Roman empire; but it must be borne in mind that this king—king to the Jews, who will receive him as their Messiah—coming as he will in his own name, acts as the prophet, the false prophet, to this monarch, and exercises all this monarch's power in his presence (Rev. xiii. 12), and that it is he who will do great wonders, so that he will make fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men in support of his claims. So great will be the unhindered display of Satanic power in this fearful era that men, being under a strong delusion, will believe a lie: that they all might be damned (judged) who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

If we turn for a moment to 2 Thessalonians ii. we shall see that the advent of this "man of sin," this "son of perdition," will not be until after the church has been caught away from the earth at the coming of the Lord. It says plainly, "And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth (the Holy Ghost in the church, as we understand the passage) [will let], until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed," etc. (vv. 6, 7.) Earlier in the chapter (v. 4) the description of this "man of sin" corresponds most strikingly with what is given in verse 36. It says, "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." It is impossible to read the two scriptures without coming to the conclusion that they refer to one and the same person, and that both alike treat of him in his relation to the Jews. The apostle John presents him

to us in his relation to Christianity, when he writes, "He is the* Antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." (1 John ii. 22.)

We also learn that he will prosper till the indignation be accomplished, etc. God will allow him to have his own way for the moment; but when the indignation is accomplished in His chastisement of the guilty nation for the rejection of Christ, at the end of the three years and a half so often spoken of in the Apocalypse, the Lord will appear from heaven and consume this wicked one with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming. (2 Thess. ii. 8; Rev. xix. 20.)

Following the prophetic narrative, we learn, in the next place, that Antichrist will be an apostate Jew; he will not "regard the God of his fathers," nor, moreover, "the desire of women, nor regard any god," for the reason already given, that "he shall magnify himself above all." This, we judge, refers to his own state of mind; but as men, speaking generally, must have some kind of religion, he will introduce a god for their acceptance—"the god of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory." (vv. 38, 39.) Entirely infidel and atheistic himself, he will, in order to satisfy the cravings of the people, promote the worship of an idol—the image, it is to be concluded, that he himself will cause to be made to the beast which had the wound by a sword and did live—the head, that is, of the western Roman Empire in its last

* The article is in the text, though not given in the *Authorised Version*.

revived form. Concerning this we read in Revelation that "the king" of this chapter in Daniel, the beast in Revelation who "had two horns like a lamb, and...spake as a dragon" (for they are one and the same person), "had power to give life (breath) unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." (Chapter xiii. 15.)* Endowed as this "wilful king" will be with such Satanic art and power, it is easily understood how readily he will obtain ascendancy over the minds of men, and succeed in subduing them to his will for the execution of his diabolical designs. It is of this period the apostle speaks when he says that God will send upon men, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, a strong delusion that they should believe a lie. (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.)

The last clause of verse 39 is not so clear. It reads: "And he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain." Its purport has been generally taken to signify that he will promote his own followers to places of honour and rule, and apportion the land either for his own personal profit or as rewards for faithful service, devotedness to his interests. The term "the land" settles beyond doubt the sphere of this king's influence and activity; for it always, as far as we know, describes the land of promise. This in Scripture language is emphatically *the* land; and consequently it bears out the conclusion arrived at before, that Jerusalem and

* To prevent confusion, it must again be recalled that, in addition to the image which Antichrist will make and cause to be worshipped throughout the Roman Empire, he will himself sit as a god in the temple at Jerusalem.

Palestine is the seat of the wilful king's power, and thus that he is the Antichrist.

Now that the Antichrist has been portrayed in his moral characteristics, the Spirit of God, through the angel, passes on to describe the actings—mainly of the king of the north, though the king of the south is also mentioned. Two or three introductory observations will aid the reader in the study of this part of our scripture. He will now see, from the fact mentioned in verse 40, the reason of the detailed accounts of the conflicts between the kings of the north and south in the earlier part of the chapter. It is simply because of the relationship of these two sovereigns to the Jews and to "the land," and because of their typical and prophetic character in reference to the end. To understand what took place in these conflicts in the past is the qualification for the understanding of what will take place in the future. With this is connected a very important thing, which is revealed in the prophetic scriptures. The kings of the south and north appear in verse 40, and it is "at the time of the end"; Edom, Moab, and Ammon are named in verse 41 as existing at the same period; and it may be gathered from many other scriptures that when the Jews are once more in their own land, the nations that formerly surrounded them, and were in proximate relationship with them, will re-appear in their old places. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people [peoples] according to the number of the children of Israel." (Deut. xxxii. 8.) When therefore Israel again occupies its place, the bounds of the peoples will be restored according to their divine and original determin-

ation. To perceive this, as revealed in the Scripture, is to possess the key of a large portion of prophecy.*

To return to our subject, we are told that the "wilful king," will, at the time of the end, be attacked by the king of the south; and that this will bring his adversary, the king of the north, into the field, who will "come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships." (v. 40.) At this period the king of the north, strong, "but not by his own power" (chapter viii. 24), will combine both military and naval forces in his expedition, and will apparently be successful in all his projects. It is not precisely stated what will be the issue of his campaign in Palestine; but we gather from chapter viii. that he will "destroy the mighty and the holy people" (v. 24), and here we learn that he "shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown." (vv. 40, 41.) Doubtless this is the overflowing scourge, of which Isaiah speaks, as passing through the land, and treading down the "scornful men" that rule this people which is in Jerusalem." (xxviii. 14-22.)

Then, as a wonderful confirmation of the truth and unity of all Scripture, we are told, "But these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief

* It may be interesting to some to state that there are four words used in the Old Testament for people and peoples—one always in the singular, either "the people" or "my people" for Israel; another in the plural to indicate the heathen or nations who are in contrast with Israel as the people of God—Israel is once so designated to mark its guilt in Psalm xliiii. 1; another for the peoples and nations in general on the earth, the various races of mankind; and lastly one for "the nations, viewed, I think, in connection with Israel restored, and taken into relationship with Jehovah." (See *The Synopsis*, by J. N. Darby, vol. ii. pp. 84, 85.)

of the children of Ammon." (v. 41.) If we turn to Isaiah xi. we find the explanation. It says, speaking of the time after both Judah and Israel have been restored, "They shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them." (v. 14.) God's judgment upon these three nations is to be executed by Israel; and on this account the Assyrian, the king of the north, will not be permitted to touch them; but they will escape out of his hand.

If however these nations elude his vengeance, he will carry his successes into other countries, and especially into Egypt. "The land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps." But it would not be according to the divine purpose that he should go further, or even consolidate his conquests in these southern regions. As the blind instrument of God's will, he may overcome all the forces brought against him, and enrich himself with the treasures of Egypt, and thus be the executor of God's judgment upon that country. But, his work done, he must return, and "tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many." (v. 44.) Evidently news of approaching enemies from the east, the east of Syria, and it may be of domestic foes, as the north points to his own country, will reach him; and he, flushed at the moment with his successes, will start, confident in his own power, and "with great fury," to deal with his foes.

It is as he is marching homewards that he will, as the next verse informs us, "plant the tabernacles of his

palace between the seas* in the glorious holy mountain." (v. 45.) Like his type, Antiochus Epiphanes, he makes Jerusalem and the land the first object of his hostility on his return from Egypt; and then it is added, "Yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." Of the circumstances of the termination of his career we are not told; the simple fact is recorded that, in connection with his hostility against the glorious holy mountain, his end is reached, and he dies under the judgment of God. In chapter viii. we read that the little horn, who undoubtedly is the king of the north, will "stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand." (v. 25.) If this refer to the same event, as appears probable, we have in both scriptures the destruction of the prophetic Assyrian by the Lord Himself, and hence he is broken "without hand," that is, without human instrumentality, and moreover, "none shall help him." For, as we learn from Isaiah, "the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled." (Chapter x. 38.) Whether this event must be placed before or after the destruction of the beast and of the false prophet can only be determined by a careful study of the prophetic scriptures. If Zechariah xiv. give the final assault of Jerusalem it must be placed unquestionably after the Lord has cast the beast and antichrist alive into the lake of fire. (See also Micah v. 4, 5.)

It may be well to add that the end of the "wilful king," the antichrist, is not here given—that is found in

* If this rendering be accepted it will mean the Mediterranean, or Great Sea, and the Dead Sea; but there are those who understand the expression to mean, "between Jerusalem and the Sea."

Rev. xix. where he is described as the false prophet. Here it is the end of the king of the north, one of the most formidable enemies of the Jews in the last days—during the time of their unequalled sorrows. They will be beset on every hand; for in addition to the Assyrian (the king of the north), there will be the first beast of Rev. xiii. (the imperial head of the western empire) and his ally the antichrist, as well as the king of the south mentioned in verse 40 of our chapter. This will enable us to understand the language of the Spirit of Christ in Psalm cxviii. "All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." (*vv.* 10–12.)

CHAPTER XII.

IN reference to the question discussed at the close of the previous chapter as to whether or not the end of the king of the north in verse 45 is the final judgment upon the Assyrian, light is thrown upon it by the first verse of this chapter. The words, "And at that time shall Michael stand up," will refer to the period of the events described in chapter xi. 36-45, because they are followed by the statement that "there shall be a time of trouble"—the period of unspeakable sorrow for the Jews in the land before the appearing of Christ. Then it is said, "At that time thy people shall be delivered," that is, as we know from other scriptures, at the close of the tribulation, and therefore after the destruction of both Antichrist and the Assyrian. There are three important things contained in this opening verse. The first is the action of Michael. We learned from chapter x. 21 that this exalted intelligence had a special connection with the Jews in the ordering of God's providential government, and that he was consequently termed by the angel, when speaking to Daniel, "Michael your prince." Now we gather, whatever his special functions up to this period, that, at the moment indicated by the first words of verse 1, he begins to act in a more energetic way, interposing with power on behalf of the nation entrusted to his care. Have we any means of discovering what the particular action was, as signified by the words, "At that time shall Michael stand up"? Turning to Rev. xii. we read, "And

there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon . . . was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." And thereon there was a loud outburst of joy in heaven because "the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God night and day." (vv. 7-10.) This we cannot doubt is the commencement of the activity of the archangel, when he shall stand up for Daniel's people.

This conclusion is sustained by the fact that the unparalleled time of trouble follows, and this harmonizes with what we find in Revelation: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." And in the very next verse we read: "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [Israel] which brought forth the man child [Christ]." (Rev. xii. 12, 13.) Remark, moreover, as having a distinct bearing on the subject, that the woman is endowed with power to escape from his enmity, and is "nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent"; and also that, when the dragon was foiled in his attempt to destroy the woman, he was wroth with her, "and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." (Rev. xii. 14-17.)

If this interpretation be correct, the next clause of the verse is at once understood. It says: "And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." There are two other

remarkable allusions to this same period of sorrow and tribulation. In Jeremiah we read, "For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." (Chap. xxx. 5-7.) And the next verse describes his deliverance by the Lord Himself, just as in Daniel the time of trouble is followed by deliverance. Our Lord has also spoken of this period as follows: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matt. xxiv. 21, 22.) To prevent all possibility of mistake as to the period of this tribulation, the Lord expressly connects it with the setting up of the "abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet . . . in the holy place." It will be remembered, from what was said of the seventieth week, when considering chapter ix., that this occurrence takes place in the middle of that week.

This time of trouble therefore is its last half—the time and times and the dividing of time of chapter vii. 25; the time, times, and an half of verse 7 of this chapter; and the 1,260 days, or forty-two months of Revelation. Satan is the instigator of the trouble; but his agents, as we learn elsewhere, will be the two great enemies of the faithful remnant among the Jews, the two beasts of Rev. xiii., and their enemy from without, the Assyrian. But while Satan is the prime mover of all the sorrow

through which Daniel's people will have to pass, it must be borne in mind that God uses it as His judicial rod to punish His people for their crowning sin in the rejection of their Messiah. Restored to their land, after the captivity in Babylon, Christ came in the fulness of time, and was born in Bethlehem, according to the prediction of their prophets, and His forerunner, John the Baptist, proclaimed His advent; but when He came to His own, His own received Him not; they refused and rejected Him, even going so far as to say, "We have no king but Cæsar," and to accept the guilt of His death, crying, "His blood be on us, and on our children." God could not but chastise the guilty nation, and this "time of trouble" is the period during which His rod, whatever the instruments, will fall in successive and ever heavier strokes until "the indignation be accomplished."

But in the midst of wrath He will remember mercy, for unless those days should be shortened, as we have seen, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened; and hence it is that we read at the close of verse 1: "And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." The period indicated is, of course, at the close of the "time of trouble." As indeed we gather from other prophets, it will be at the moment when all hope will seem to have departed, just when the jaws of the roaring lion are about to close upon his prey, that the Lord will suddenly appear for the succour and rescue of His poor and afflicted people. (See Zechariah xii.-xiv.; Isaiah xxv. xxvi. etc.)

It is interesting to note the distinction here made between the mass of the nation and the elect remnant. It is not all who are delivered, but "every one that shall

be found written in the book." It is very clear therefore that God has His elect amongst His earthly people, as well as that His heavenly people are the objects of His eternal choice in Christ. They are mentioned, too, in Revelation, where, after the account of the blasphemous conduct of the first beast of chapter xiii., we read, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain* from the foundation of the world." God therefore from the foundation of the world, not *before* it as in the case of the heavenly saints (Ephes. i. 4), had chosen this remnant, who should prove their election by refusing to worship the image of the beast. (Compare 1 Thess. i. 4, 5); and it is of these the angel says that they shall be delivered. Some indeed may seal their fidelity with martyrdom, but, if so, they will obtain a better deliverance, for they will be reserved for heavenly blessing, participating in the first resurrection; but whether thus, or whether, like the 144,000 on Mount Zion, they are brought through the time of trouble, all alike will be redeemed from the hand of their enemies through the faithfulness and power of their God.

The next verse (2) is more comprehensive: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." It should be borne in mind that during the "time of trouble" only two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, are in the land; the remaining ten will be lost, as they are now, among the nations; and it is to these that this verse refers. After the Lord has appeared and succoured the faithful remnant in Judah and Jerusalem (Zechariah

* This is better rendered "Whose names had not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb."

xii.), He will establish His throne in Mount Zion, and thereafter He will recover His lost people, as we read in the prophet Ezekiel: "And I will bring you out from the people [peoples], and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered. . . . And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. . . . And I will purge out from among you the rebels and them that transgress against me. . . . And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers" (Chapter xx. 33-42.)

Now this passage treats entirely of Israel—that is, the ten tribes as distinguished from the Jews (the two tribes); and it will be seen, if it be attentively considered, that it speaks of two classes—one who will be brought back to the land for blessing, and the other who will be judged in the wilderness. It is of these same two classes that verse 2 speaks. Both alike are regarded as sleeping in the dust of the earth while lost and scattered among the nations; but when the Lord "shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet" to gather "His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. xxiv. 31), all alike will be awakened; some, as we here read, to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. The same contrast is found in the judgment of the living nations, of whom some shall go away into everlasting punishment, and some into life eternal. (Matt. xxv. 31.) This last scripture is important as showing that the saints during the millennium will enjoy eternal life, if not of the same character as that which Christians possess, yet according to the revelation God will make of Himself to His people of that dispensa-

tion. It will be the "life for evermore" of which David speaks in Psalm cxxxiii. as characterising millennial blessedness.

Some however may enquire whether this verse (*v.* 2) does not rather speak of resurrection. Two considerations will, we judge, show that it does not; and that the interpretation given is according to the teaching of scripture. In the first place, the figure of "awaking" is constantly employed in a moral sense in the Old Testament (see Isaiah li. 17, lii. 1, etc.); and even in the New it is used in a most striking way. The apostle, for example, writing to the Ephesians, says, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephes. v. 14); and no one could doubt the figurative sense in this passage. Secondly, the prophet Ezekiel uses the figure of resurrection plainly in the sense of a national revival. We say "plainly," because the application the prophet himself makes shows, beyond question, what was intended. (See Ezekiel xxxvii. 1-14.)

What we gather therefore is, that God, in some special and extraordinary way, will arouse His scattered people from the lethargy into which they have fallen, and will kindle once more within their hearts the expectation of the fulfilment of the prophetic promises concerning their restoration and blessing under their Messiah. But, together with the re-awakening of their national hopes, God will purge out the rebels from among them, preparatory to their restoration, so that it will be literally true that some will awake to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

The third verse speaks of the class, we apprehend, mentioned in the previous chapter (*v.* 33); only here it may be that they are divided into two classes—those

who are wise, and those who turn many to righteousness, or, as some prefer to render it, those who instruct the many in righteousness. Adopting this rendering, it will point back to the energetic testimony God raised up in the midst of the Jews during the last half week, when Satan's power was demonstrated without let or hindrance. Even then there will be those, chosen and sustained by God, who, undaunted by the terrors of the times, will courageously maintain the authority of God's word, and unweariedly seek to bring "the many" under its influence and power. In the establishment of the kingdom, whatever their sufferings, or even martyrdom, on account of their testimony, their past service will be recognised, and they will occupy a special place. Those that be wise, having possessed God's mind, and having been endowed with divine wisdom, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; they will be conspicuously displayed as in the enjoyment of the special favour of God; and they that instruct the many in righteousness [shall shine] as the stars for ever and ever; they shall be assigned a place of authority and light-giving throughout the duration of the kingdom. (Compare Luke xix. 15-19.)

The revelation through Daniel's celestial visitant is now completed, and he receives the command: "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." (v. 4.) It has often been noticed, in contrast with this instruction to Daniel, that John, at the close of the book of Revelation, is directed *not* to seal "the sayings of the prophecy of this book," and the reason given is that "the time is at hand." (Rev. xxii. 10.) This explains the difference between the positions occupied by Daniel and John.

The time was not at hand for Daniel, and thus his book was to be sealed to the time of the end. If it be asked how it is that we possess the means for the understanding of that which was to be sealed "to the time of the end," the answer is that this period has arrived for Christians. Paul speaks of the "last days," and John of the "last time." (2 Timothy iii. 1; 1 John ii. 18.) The death of Christ indeed, which took place "in the consummation of the ages," inaugurated the time of the end; and hence for those who are Christians, possessing the Holy Ghost, there is nothing concealed. (John xvi. 13; 1 John ii. 20.) Through the Spirit of God therefore, "the time of the end" having arrived, Daniel's book is unsealed; and if we fail to apprehend what was communicated to him, it is either because we are not in the state of soul which gives the opened ear and entire subjection to the divine word (see Isaiah l. 4, 5), or because we have not given serious attention to what has been revealed.

The statement that many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased, would seem to give the characteristics of the period from the days of Daniel until "the time of the end." How true it is of the present moment; and until the Lord comes it will be ever more fully exemplified.

From verse 5 we have the conclusion of Daniel's prophetic visions. He is still by the river Hiddekel; and he tells us, "Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" (vv. 5, 6.) The answer explains

the question. The man clothed in fine linen "held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." (v. 7.) From the introduction of the familiar period, "time, times, and an half," that is, the last half week, we understand that the question referred to the duration of the "time of trouble" mentioned in verse 1; and the answer states that it is limited to three years and a half, or 1260 days. The latter part of the answer states also, that when God has collected His scattered people, having accomplished His purposes in their dispersion,* all these things shall be finished. Two things are thus revealed: that the period of tribulation shall not extend beyond the half-week; and that, at the close of it, having succoured His people already in the land, God will assemble His outcast people from all the quarters where they have been dispersed. These two things are confirmed by a divine oath—one of the two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, for a comparison of this scripture with Rev. x. 5-7 will surely lead to the conclusion that He who utters this oath is more than man.

Daniel heard, and understood not; and then said, "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" He is reminded that "the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end"; and then a further communication is made: "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise

* This, as we understand it, is the force of this somewhat difficult sentence.

shall understand." (v. 10.) It is evident that the reference is still to the "time of trouble" in the last half week; and what we learn is, that the Lord will take up the sorrows and trials of that time and use them as needful discipline for those that wait on Him—His faithful remnant amid the wickedness and apostasy by which they will be surrounded. Whatever their sufferings, therefore, "many shall be purified, and made white, and tried." It is on this principle God ever acts, even as the apostle teaches that God chastens us "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." (Heb. xii. 10.) But if God thus purges His people from their dross, the wicked—the wicked, we apprehend, among the Jews—"shall do wickedly." They will, under the leadership of Antichrist, sin with a high hand, throw off all restraint, and fall into open and avowed apostasy.

The last part of the verse alludes to verse 8, where Daniel says he understood not; and in it we have a principle of abiding importance. It gives us the indispensable condition of understanding divine things as revealed in God's word. It says, "None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." There may be the plainest of testimonies, but if the heart, alienated from God, be bent upon wickedness, it will not comprehend it. What is purest light to God's people will be densest darkness to the sinners amongst the nation. The wise only will understand; and let it be for ever remembered that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, that Christ in this present time is the only wisdom of His people. It had been well if this had been remembered, especially now, when the Scriptures of truth are being assailed with persistency, not to say virulence, by men of learning and intel-

lectual power. "The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." And again, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 11-14.) None therefore but the wise, the spiritually wise, can in any dispensation enter into the mind of God, however plainly it may be revealed in His word.

It is on the basis of this principle, in answer to Daniel's question, "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" (v. 8) that the "man clothed in linen" makes further revelations to the prophet. He now tells him in most express language that "from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." (v. 11.) It is this scripture our Lord cites in Matt. xxiv. so far as the setting up of the abomination of desolation is concerned; and from chapter ix. 27 we have gathered that these things will take place in the middle of the seventieth week; and if so, there will remain only 1,260 days for these prophetic weeks to run their course. But here we have an addition of thirty days. Is it possible to explain the reason of this? Nothing certain can be said; only it is clear, from many references both in this book and in Revelation, that the 1,260 days fix the duration of the "time of trouble," which will be ended by the appearing of Christ. At His coming in glory the beast and the false prophet are taken and cast alive into the lake of fire (Rev. xix.), and He will go forth and fight against the nations that will at that time be besieging Jerusalem. There are several great events therefore to follow the termination of the last

half week preparatory to the establishment of Messiah's throne in Zion; and it is possible that this is the reason for the additional thirty days. There is, however, in verse 12, a further forty-five days: "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." From the very form in which this extra period is introduced, it evidently points to the full establishment of blessing in the ordering of the kingdom. We may cite on this point the words of a well-known student of the Scriptures: "I have thought it possible that this computation may arise from this. An intercalary month to the 1,260 days, or three years and a half, and then 45 days, if the years were ecclesiastical years, would bring up to the feast of tabernacles; but I offer no judgment on it. At any rate, the statement is clear that then the sanctuary of God is cleansed in Jerusalem."* If the reader will turn to Leviticus xxiii. he will understand the purport of the remark as to the feast of tabernacles, as he will perceive that it is the last of the cycle of feasts—a feast which was intended to celebrate Israel's rest, and possession of the land, after their wanderings in the wilderness; a feast, therefore, which as yet, according to the teaching of Heb. iii. and iv., has had no complete fulfilment. It awaits its realisation, according to the thoughts of God, until the true Solomon, after He has, as the true David, executed judgment upon His enemies, shall give rest to His people, when with joy they will draw water out of the wells of salvation. (Isaiah xii. 3; compare John vii. 37.)

* It is clear, from chap. ix, 24, that the period includes the anointing of the most Holy. If therefore the three years and a half, 1260 days, determine the duration of the time of trouble, there might be a further period for the introduction of the full blessing thus indicated.

But Daniel does not enter upon this scene of millennial joy. He is occupied with the times of the Gentiles up to the deliverance of his people. It was reserved for other prophets to speak of the establishment of the kingdom and of the blessings of Messiah's reign.*

And now with one last word to the prophet the book is ended. Vessel of the divine mind as to the times of the Gentiles, and the deliverance of his people, his work is done, and he is now bidden to retire from the scene: "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." (*v.* 13.) Rest was to follow on the completion of his labours, and he would have his own special place in the kingdom at the end of the days. Our Lord Himself said, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (*Matt.* viii. 11); and Daniel will share in the glories of that day. Now one of the spirits of just men made perfect, he will then participate in the first resurrection; and, returning with all the risen saints with Christ in glory, he will stand in his lot, occupy the special place assigned him, in the kingdom of Him, whom he had seen in the night visions as the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven.

* It is remarkable how few are the scriptures that treat of the actual blessings of the reign of Christ. Among the Psalms, for example, it is only Psalm lxxii. and cxlv. that do so. There are many more that deal with His coming, and with the joy of His people in His reception, but they stop short of the millennial reign itself. Neither does Isaiah, who the most frequently alludes prophetically to the coming glories of Immanuel's rule, go much further.

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