A Patristic Commentary



The Book of Daniel

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Commentaries and Contemplation
From
The Early Fathers of the Church

DANIEL

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THE BOOK FOR EVERY BELIEVER

The book of Daniel has a special significance in the life of believers, for it is not a record of Daniel's life, or of an era of the history of the Israelites during the Babylon captivity. But rather it is a divine book that the Holy Spirit offers us to instill hope in the hurt souls. Sometimes, God allows throwing us in the fiery furnace of trials, yet He changes the nature of fire for our comfort and peace.

On the one hand, the book reveals to us that God is the **Controller of all histories**, who works for the edification of his faithful believers in any place. On the other hand, this book reveals to us that God is glorified in the very few people who are sincere to Him. He is their support in sanctifying their lives and a fiery fence that protects them and arranges everything for their salvation.

God allows His believers to go through tribulations, as He allowed Daniel while still a youth. Yet He elevated him to the highest level so that the greatest king at that time came and worshipped him, realizing that the Spirit of the Holy One is inside him. God enlightened Daniel's vision and granted him not only the wisdom to know the king's dreams and to interpret them, and conducting all the affairs of the kingdom wisely, but rather to enjoy the surpassing mysteries of God. So the Holy Spirit revealed to him the future and eternal work of God with humanity.

It is the book of **divine friendship**, which can lift up the believer's heart to a surpassing heavenly life, even if he lives in captivity during his sojourn.

It is also the book of **divine knowledge**, which God offers to His chosen and beloved people. This knowledge stems from faith, from a heart filled with divine love. This knowledge is granted through the experience of severe tribulation and enduring sufferings for the sake of God and His people. The book also reveals how Satan tries to take away this knowledge by destroying our faith.

Finally, this book is directed to **every believer to reveal to him what is the active role he can play at Church as well as in the life of the human race**. For Daniel was not devoted only to the ministry and prophecy, but rather he was playing the role of a Prime Minister of a country, which dominates the whole world. He knew how to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. Daniel did not go back to Jerusalem like those who came back from the captivity, did not participate in building the walls of Jerusalem with Nehemiah, and did not restore building the temple with Zorobabel, but he was the first man who worked secretly on these matters. He influenced the kings of Babylon and Persia; he offered a great service through his holy life and his faithfulness in his work.

May the Spirit of God enlighten our vision so we may discover His divine mysteries, know Him, accept His friendship with us, and may He use us in whatever way He sees suitable for the building of His kingdom.

Father Tadros Y. Malaty

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel was contemporary to Ezekiel the Prophet, and younger in age. Ezekiel offered us Jerusalem with its temple, which became desolate due to corruption. At the same time, he saw through the spirit of prophecy, the return from the captivity but the erection of a new temple, the temple of the New Testament where the divine grace overflows. However, Daniel offered us not only the return from the captivity, but also the encounter with the true Liberator, the Lord Jesus Christ, who can liberate us from the bondage of sin and allows us to enter into His glory. Moreover, He opens our eyes and our hearts to see Him coming at the end of ages to form, from his believers, shining stars in His image. The two captive prophets agreed to reveal God's care for His believers, assuring them that He will never forget them, no matter how long the period is.

DANIEL

The book of Daniel reveals to us his unique character:

- Daniel was **a prophet occupied with administration**. However, he knew that he should not mix between administration and the prophetic spiritual work assigned to him. His position as administrator did not make him lose his heavenly vision and his concern for the salvation of his soul and the salvation of his people, even more the salvation of the pagan kings who dealt with him. His high level position in the largest pagan empire did not prevent him from witnessing to the true God and from preserving His Law, not through violence but through the spirit of wisdom, love and courage.
- He **served his people**, not with the spirit of fanaticism, but with the spirit of holiness and humility, with love to all people. He supported them in the land of captivity where he found grace in the eyes of the kings. He also opened the doors of hope before the people in captivity, and before all the Gentiles.
- He **looked to the future** through the work of the Holy Spirit inside him. God granted him lots of visions.
- He is **the father of the history of the Gentiles**. He recorded many precise prophecies about the kingdoms following one another, through God's plan. The book of Daniel is the only book in the Old Testament that prophesied in details about kings and kingdoms, which he had named like Persia and Greece.
- He is **the prophet of dreams and visions**, who enjoyed a divine gift, a heavenly wisdom and a surpassing understanding.
- He is **the prophet who determined the times for salvation, the end of the world**, and was occupied with the times of the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus Christ called him "*Daniel the Prophet*" (Matthew 24:15). Because of his frequent prophecies, which counted sixty, the book of Daniel is the book of the Old Testament that is mostly read and studied in the Christian Church.
- He was **a man of wisdom**. Ezekiel referred to him together with Noah, and Job as the most righteous men of God (Ezek.14:14, 20). He mentioned him as one of the wisest

men, for the divine inspiration mentioned that God said to the king of Tyre "*Behold, you are wiser than Daniel! There is no secret that can be hidden from you!*" (Ezek. 28:3). The Spirit of God granted him the gift of revealing the meaning of dreams, as the pagan king told him "*I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you"* (Dan. 4:9).

- Daniel was **very skillful in architecture**, for he is the one who designed the building of the famous tower of Shushan in Persia, where the kings of Persia lived, as stated by Josephus, the Jewish historian.

Daniel was probably born in Jerusalem, and was captive in Babylon like Ezekiel (Dan. 1:1-2). However, Daniel was a captive at the time of the first captivity, during the days of Jehoiakim, in the year 606 BC, while Ezekiel was a captive at the time of the second captivity. Daniel was imprisoned in Babylon, while he was a young, and he was from the tribe of Judah (Dan. 1:7); probably he was from the royal house, from the descendants of David (Dan. 1:3). He learned the Chaldean language with the three youths. Some people say he lived about 84 years, from 618 to 534 BC[1].

God granted him wisdom and grace, thus he served during the times of the kingdoms of Babylon, Medes and Persia. Being faithful to the kings, he remained faithful to God. He did not eat from the delicacies offered to idols, and rejected worshipping idols. He was courageous in explaining the visions and dreams to the kings, without complimenting them.

He lived in very critical decades, for he lived with great kings like Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and Cyrus of Persia. At his time, no one was able to talk to such great kings, even with gentleness, however, Daniel, who was a stranger and a captive, was able to talk with them frankly and boldly with humility, showing them their mistakes.

The Holy Bible mentioned two other persons carrying the same name:

a. Daniel, David's son from Abigail, was born in Hebron (1 Chron. 3:1). He was called Chileab (2 Sam. 3:3).

b. A priest from Ithamar's family, who returned with Ezra and represented his father's house. He was one of those who sealed the covenant during Ezra's era (Ezra 8:2; Neh.10:6).

THE STATUS OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

In the Hebrew version known as the "*Masoretic*," the Jews do not consider the book of Daniel as one of the prophets' books, but as one of the wisdom books "*Katobim*." Some people think that the Jews moved the book from the prophets' books to the wisdom books because the book indicates clearly and precisely the time of the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ and His crucifixion.

- Others give the following reason for that move. All the prophets, whether in Israel, Judah, even in the land of captivity, were dedicated to the prophetic work lived among the people, talked to them and to the religious and secular leaders about repentance and the return to God. However, Daniel the prophet had a unique status in the palace. He played the role of a Prime Minister before pagan kings. He dealt only with kings and rulers and had no contacts with the Jewish religious leaders or even with the

[1] *Cf. G. Coleman Luck: Daniel, 1958, p.7.*

governors of Israel regarding religious issues. Hence, the people looked at him as an effective leader in the palace.

- The prophets used to spend a great deal of their time to rebuke the people for their sins but Daniel did not play that role.
- Some Jewish rabbis[1] see that Daniel did not suffer as much as Jeremiah or the other prophets. They only see that he lived like a prince or as a Prime Minister but, in fact, Daniel was persecuted like the other prophets, lived a very pious life and never indulged himself with delicacies (10:3). As he lived in the spirit of prophecies for many days, he lost much weight and became very weak (8:27). He was also exposed to many conspiracies and was falsely accused and cast in the den of lions.
- The fact that Daniel wrote his book in a pagan country is another reason for considering the book as part of the books of wisdom. However, Ezekiel, too, wrote his book in the land of captivity but his book is still considered as one of the prophets' books.

In all events**, Josephus**, the Jewish historian, called Daniel one of the "**greatest prophets**."

THE BOOK OF DANIEL WAS WRITTEN FOR WHOM? [2]

No doubt that at the time of writing his book, Daniel was thinking of the Jews in the captivity beside the other Jews scattered all over the globe. The book was then written for their edification as well as for the edification of the future generations to alert them to the arrival of Messiah the Savior. It was also written for us, the believers, for our spiritual benefit, to be eagerly awaiting the Second Advent of the Lord and to be ready for it. Maybe it was written for the edification of the Babylonians too.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK

1. The book of Daniel, like the book of Revelation, is considered as a book of visions or "*apocalyptic*." This word means "revelation" or "manifestation" or "*unveiling*." It is a book of prophetic visions, as well as a book of conduct and spirituality, which portrays a living picture of the practical life in faith while awaiting the life to come.

2. This whole book is a declaration of the power of God and His wisdom in controlling the world until the end of the days in order to achieve a divine plan. The book did not portray the life of Daniel or the history of Israel during captivity. Also, it doesn't portray the history of the Babylonian captivity, but it portrays the surpassing power of God in leading all the powers of nature, the history of nations and the kings' powers to achieve God's plan for the salvation of His people. Therefore, the word "**kingdom**" was repeated 57 times in the book.

3. The book of Daniel was written in two languages: Aramaic, used by the Babylonians as an international language, and Hebrew, which was used by the Jews beside the Greek language as in chapters thirteen and fourteen (the continuation of the book of Daniel). Daniel used the Aramaic language when addressing the Babylonians and recording what they were saying, and used the Hebrew language when addressing the

[1] *See Bethany Parallel commentary on the Old Testament, 1985, p. 1764.*
[2] *Cf. Baker's Pictorial Introduction to the Bible, 1967, p. 196.*

Jews. This reveals how much Daniel cared about details to the point that he did not want his discussions with the Babylonians to be translated.

Although the book of Daniel was written in more than one language and contained history, prophecies and visions, it was aiming to one goal and was homogenous in thoughts. For example, the statue mentioned in chapter two corresponds to the beasts mentioned in chapter seven and to the prophecies mentioned in chapters seven to twelve.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples used many **similes and comparisons** seen in the book of Daniel, especially regarding the end of the days.

THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK AND THE THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT IN IT

1. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah had completely deviated toward the pagan worship, and the captivity of their people by the Babylonians and the Assyrians was for their chastisement. Therefore, the book of Daniel presents a clear lesson, which is the assurance that there is **one God** in the entire world, and everybody has to submit to Him in true sincerity. And that it is foolish to see someone worshipping the pagans or depending on any pagan power or wisdom. Though the world asks the believers not to be sincere to God, however, the believers boldly reject that.

God is the Lord of history and the King of the universe; nothing is hidden from His eyes. He foresees all the events of the history, and He directs the pagan kingdoms while respecting the freedom of the individual. Nothing happens haphazardly in the world or without God's direction. The book of Daniel testifies the confession of great pagan kings to the dominion of God over all human beings in all generations. (Dan. 2:47; 4:37; 6:26)

God is the king of heaven (4:37), the God of heaven (2:44), and the God of gods (2:47; 11:36). The Lord of kings (2:47) has the right to exclude and to elevate kings (2:12). The Prince of hosts (8:11), the only glorified God in the universe (3:45); the great and awesome God (9:4), His dominion from generation to generation (4:33).

God reveals His hidden wisdom and ability to His righteous people, a revealer of secrets (2:47), and grants wisdom and knowledge (2:12).

The Savior (3:29): His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him (7:27). He keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments (9:4). His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away (7:14), He is the God of our fathers. (11:37)

The book reveals **the weaknesses and the failure of the pagan gods** versus the above:

- The gods were unable to reveal the dream to the magi and the magicians. (ch 2)
- They were unable to burn the three youths in the fiery furnace. (ch 3)
- They were unable to deliver Nebuchadnezzar from being expelled to live like an animal of the wilderness eating grass. (ch.4)
- They were unable to stir the hungry lions to devour Daniel the Prophet. (ch 6)

2. The book **presents the Lord Jesus** as the Stone, cut out of a mountain without hands (2:45), which struck the image, which became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (2:35)

He is the Son of God (3:25); the Ancient of Days (7:9); the Son of man (7:3); the

Lord of His kingdom (7:14); the Prince of princes (8:25); the Most Holy (9:24); the Messiah (9:25); His dominion is an everlasting dominion (7:14; Lk.32:33; Phil.2:9-11).

As long as this book is the book of God's continuous work in the world in the midst of all difficult trends, therefore the Lord Christ appears in many forms in this book based on our needs and for our support and edification. **St. Ireneaus** said: [He does not appear in one form, but He appears in different forms according to the reasons of His apparition and the prospective results for His plan, as was written in the book of Daniel. The people around Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael saw God walking with them in the midst of the fire, "and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (Dan. 3:25) On another occasion, He appeared as "a stone cut out of a mountain without hands" (Dan. 2:45). He destroys all the temporary kingdoms, they vanish away and He fills the entire earth. The same person saw Him as the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days who brought Him near before Him. "Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. 7:13,14) [1]]

The Word appears before the incarnation in the seventh chapter. He looks like a man to declare that He is honoring the human being, thus preparing the way for the divine incarnation.

This book talks about the advent of the Lord Christ, determining a time for His birth, crucifixion and the great tribulation caused by the Antichrist which precedes His Second Coming, about His ministry on earth (Dan. 9:2-26), and about His spiritual kingdom (Dan. 2:44-45; John 18:36). **St. Jerome** said in the introduction of his book "Comments on Daniel": [In my introduction, I want to affirm this fact that no one has ever talked so clearly about the Lord Christ like Daniel[2].]

3. Since this book refers to the role of the Lord Christ and determined the time of His Advent therefore the Hebrew word "***Elohim***" was used to talk about God. The syllable "*im*" refers to the plural form, therefore as he confirms the oneness of God, with one divine nature, yet He is Triune, for the Messiah is the Second Person, the Savior of the world.

The surname "**Son of Man**" that was mentioned in the book of Daniel (7:13-14) was the name favored by the Lord Jesus. (Matt 24:30 - 26:24; Mk 13:26 - 14:62; Lk. 21:27 - 22:69)

4. This book dealt with the subject **"God's condemnation to the evil of paganism**." This corresponds to the name "Daniel," which means "God the Judge"

This book condemned:

*. The pagan customs (ch.1).
*. The pagan philosophy and wisdom (ch.2).
*. The pagan pride (ch.3).
*. The pagan worship (ch.4).
*. The pagan licentiousness (ch. 5).
*. The pagan persecution (ch. 6).
*. The pagan struggling between kingdoms (ch.7 - 8).

[1] *Adv. Haer. 4:20:11.*
[2] *PL 25:61.*

*. Daniel did not condemn the pagan world by attacking it, but his righteous life overcame evil and condemned it. Also, by his interpretation of the dreams and visions, he declared that God judges the pagan kingdoms by the appearance of the Messiah to spiritually rule over the hearts.

5. This book clarified that God's men who obey His commandments enjoy the following:

A. Success in this world (1:9-20; 2:48-49).

B. Knowledge of the Divine mysteries (2: 19-22-47).

C. Consolation by the presence of God during tribulations (3: 25).

D. Witnessing against evil (4: 30-37).

They endure sufferings patiently and with sincerity to God, through their sanctified lives and pure hearts.

The purpose of this book is to declare the Lord Jesus, who according to His image we are formed, and in His kingdom we shall shine as the firmament[1].

6. Often **the world attacks the divine justice**, however, on the long run, history reveals God's justice and surpassing wisdom. God is the Lord of history who uses even His attackers to achieve His holy divine plans.

7. **Regarding the Church**: while Daniel was in captivity, God revealed to him His special care and concern for the Church:

a. Although God has allowed His people to be in captivity for 70 years, yet He had to wait seven times seventy years to see their return from the captivity of sin by the coming of the Messiah. This temporary captivity was nothing but a tool to reveal a more dangerous captivity which touches the eternal life of man, thus he desires a greater return through the true salvation of God.

b. If some people mocked the believers who had faith in the return from captivity after 70 years, then the visions came to confirm that many tribulations await the Church before the coming of the Messiah and throughout the ages until each believer is prepared for Christ's heavenly kingdom.

The book has clearly stated that God is the controller of history even during the moments of chastening the believers; God allows hardships for an eternal purpose. Nothing happens haphazardly, but God cares for His Church until she reaches the heavenly glories.

c. The book describes the coming of the Messiah and what follows subsequently from annulling the letter of the Law and its shadow. Thus, the truth abides and the believers enjoy living in the Spirit.

d. On the side of the world, some giant people may think that they can dominate history by their power, so they resist God and persecute His people. However, God dethrones kings from their kingdoms in the appropriate time. He has prophesied about the Church of the New Testament as an eternal spiritual kingdom, which crushes the earthly kingdoms through her Christ, the Stone cut out without hands, Who fills the entire earth. Thus, God has elevated Daniel's thought to realize that the Church is not related to some specific people but embraces all peoples, and the whole world to present them to her Christ at the time of His second coming as glorious stars.

The quick look on the events reveals the dominion of evil in the world, but when the vision is opened, one realizes that the powers of evil are definitely vanishing to

[1] *Boyd's Bible Handbook, p. 397.*

declare the eternal kingdom of God.

8**. The angels**: Daniel dealt with many angels, especially with Archangel Gabriel, who was mentioned for the first time in the Holy Bible. It appears in this book that thousands of angels are serving God and ten thousands times ten thousand stand before Him (Dan. 7:10). The angels are spirits serving those who will inherit the salvation; hence we see that the Son of Man asks Archangel Gabriel to explain the visions to Daniel the prophet.

Revealing the heavenly world beyond the materialistic nature made some liberal critics, who do not believe in spirits, assume that what Daniel had described in his book was a reflection of the Jewish thoughts which prevailed long after the captivity. They assumed that these thoughts were not as clear in the rest of the books of the Old Testament!

To refute that, every book has its special nature, from context to circumstances to the time when it was written. This book was written in the last days of the Old Testament and it was natural that it relates to the end of the days and the heavenly world. Same as the book of Revelation, which is the last book of the New Testament and which focused on the work of Christ in heaven, the angelic world and eschatology. Also, the book of Daniel was written during the Babylonian captivity and in difficult circumstances when people suffered from dispersion, homesickness and in slavery similar to the slavery in Egypt. In such circumstances, it is natural that God reveals the better angelic world, its unusual power and its work for the benefit of the people. Also to reveal the close coming of Messiah, the Savior, the Son of David, who will sit on His throne forever. And to declare God's surpassing splendor and that He is the Lord of heaven and earth, Creator of the universe, that He is not conquered as the pagans had thought, and that He will never forsake His people.

The angels or the heavenly creatures are mentioned in all the books of the Old and New Testaments. However, talking about them in the form of visions of the latter days in the book of Daniel of the Old Testament and the book of Revelation of the New Testament was because of the nature of those two books since they mainly talk about the end of the days.

9. The Resurrection: The idea of the resurrection of the bodies and the judgment of the righteous and the wicked is clearly stated in chapter 12 verse 2.

Regarding the dogma of the resurrection from the dead, some critics object and say that this dogma was not known in the sixth century B.C., and consider this as a proof that the book was written later during the Maccabean era. However, those critics have forgotten that the Old Testament raised the possibility of the resurrection from the dead many centuries before Daniel through the people whom God raised by the hands of the prophets. We find prophet Elijah who prayed that the soul of the widow's son at Zarephath come back to him, and the boy rose from the dead (1 Kings 17: 20-21). The Bible says "and the soul of the child came back to him and he revived." (1 Kings 17: 22). Also, Elisha the prophet raised the son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4: 32-36). Above all, God said to Moses: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Matt 22: 32). This is the proof that those patriarchs are living with God in their spirits.

The Holy Bible confirms the fact that the spirit exists after the death of the body, for Job said: "And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see

God." (Job 19: 26). About the resurrection of the dead, Isaiah wrote, "Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust" (Is 26: 19) and Hosea wrote, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction!" (Hos.13: 14). The vision of Ezekiel the prophet presents this image of the resurrection from the dead, "The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then he caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" So I answered, "O Lord God, you know." Again He said to me, "Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!' Thus says the Lord God to these bones, "Surely, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. "I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord." So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. Also He said to me, "Prophesy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath. Thus says the Lord God: "come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army."(Ezek 37: 1-10) [1].

10**. The Divine Knowledge**: This book is known as the book of the divine knowledge. Daniel, with his knowledge, has challenged the wisdom, practiced through study only, of the Chaldeans, magicians and wise men. However, Daniel's knowledge was a divine gift granted to the pure struggling souls who join the living practical faith in the school of sufferings so that on the Great Lord's Day, God would glorify all those who have knowledge. "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." (Dan 12: 3-4)

DANIEL'S PERSONALITY

At the beginning of this introduction, we mentioned that Daniel was a prophet preoccupied with the administration, yet without mingling with his spiritual work. He was the beloved beholder whom God revealed to him His secrets, the father of the Gentiles' history, and the prophet of the dreams and visions. Here are the large headlines to this righteous man whom we will get to know better through our study of this book:

1. Daniel challenges difficulties and hardships and does not bow to spoiling and luxury. He lived in the castle as a man of suffering for the sake of his sincerity to God, his salvation and the salvation of his brothers. Therefore, heaven was not far from him, but heaven is close to those who meditate upon it and suffer for its sake.

2. He believed that all authority is from God, and that God directs the history of the universe, thus He grants victories and allows defeats.

3. Daniel, the statesman who plays the role of a Prime Minister, is the same one who does the work of God. He remained the same person whether in the lion's den or in the castle where all the statesmen submitted to him.

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[1] القس عبد المسيح بسيط أبو الخير: إعجاز الوحي والنبوة في سفر دانيال، ص 69.

Daniel represents a living image of the true believer, who works during his old age with the same spirit with which he worked during his youth. He works as the chief administrator to the greatest kingdom of the time with the same spirit of the beginner who worked as a servant in the palace.

Daniel was not proud of the Babylonian surname that the king gave him and which was honored in the entire state, but he used his Hebrew name throughout the book to show how much he cherishes his relationship with his captive people.

Since his young age, extreme smartness and talented gifts characterized him. God gave him grace to have this prominent position in the palace, during the captivity, to become a trustworthy witness to God in the pagan world of the era. He resembled Joseph, whom God has appointed at the beginning of the history as the second man in the Pharaoh's palace, to testify faithfully to his God. Daniel was appointed to the Babylonian palace at the end of that era to fulfill the same role.

4. Daniel was faithful in his private life, his worship, as well as in his daily work.

Regarding his private life, he was very strict with himself in achieving his goal. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank" (Dan 1: 8). He was honest and faithful as a saint (ch. 1) and brave without any fear like a wise man (Dan 2: 4-5). He was extremely meek and humble, always confessing his sins before God and before himself. He was very brave and courageous, did not fear emperors or governors. Through his meekness he was able to conquer lions and through his wisdom he was able to win many.

Regarding his worship, he was fervent in spirit, offering prayers and supplications with fasting, sackcloth and ashes (Dan 9: 3). **St. Basil the Great** presents him as a practical example of perseverance in prayers. He said: [How do I deserve to be with Daniel if I do not pray to God with perseverance and with supplication full of zeal? [1]]

Regarding his daily work as a statesman, he was not a plotter or an opportunist but the wise man of God. No doubt, he had his weaknesses, but he was considered without blemish. All his zeal enemies could not utter a word against him, and the Bible did not mention any specific fault about him. "So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him" (Dan 6: 4). He also said to the king, "Because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." (Dan6: 22)

The world had honored Daniel and he became a statesman carrying the secrets of the kingdoms dominating the world. God made him His ambassador and declared to him the detailed history of the end of the world.

St. Hippolytus of Rome wrote in his *Commentary on the book of Daniel*: [I see the testimony of this saintly and righteous man, the prophet and beholder of Christ, who not only revealed the visions of King Nebuchadnezzar, but also trained the three youths to become true witnesses in the world[2].] He called Daniel **the blessed saint, the righteous, and beholder of Christ.**

He was a true witness to God and touched the life of the pagan king who became attracted to God and declared his faith. Nebuchadnezzar said about him, "I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you" (Dan 4: 9). Belshazzar, the

[1] *The Long Rules: Preface.*
[2] *ANFrs., vol. 5, p. 177.*

last Babylonian king, told him, “I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you” (Dan 5: 14). It was said about him, “An excellent spirit was in him; and there was no error or fault found in him” (Dan 6: 3-4). In the book of Ezekiel, he was mentioned as one of the three righteous men: Noah, Daniel, and Job. (Ezek14: 14). When God rebuked the king of Tyre, He said, “Behold, you are wiser than Daniel! There is no secret that can be hidden from you!” (Ezek 28: 3)

5. Daniel was not granted understanding to all the visions, “for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (Dan 12: 9). God said, “But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.” (Dan 12: 13). As the end approaches, we have to realize and understand some of the secrets of the book of Daniel.

6. As we live like Daniel and his friends, we get ready to enter with Christ in His glory on the day of His appearance: “Where I am, you also will be.”

THE BOOK OF DANIEL AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- The book of Daniel is called the book of the Revelation of the Old Testament, while the book of Revelation is called the book of the Revelation of the New Testament.
- As the angel (possibly Archangel Gabriel) accompanied Daniel to explain to him most of the visions (Dan 7: 16; 8: 16; 9: 22), likewise an angel accompanied St. John, the beloved, to do the same job.
- The book of Revelation used the surname “Son of Man” to call the Lord Jesus (Rev 1: 13; 14: 14), the same surname used by Daniel (Dan 7: 13-14).
- The angel called Daniel “The beloved man,” three times (Dan 9: 23; 10: 11, 19), and St. John was called John the Beloved, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” was repeated five times (John 11: 23; 19: 26; 20: 2; 21: 7,20).
- Daniel wrote this book while being captive in Babylon, while St. John wrote his book of revelation while he was in exile in the island of Patmos (Rev 1: 9).
- The book of Daniel is the special book for the victorious kingdom of Christ over the four empires, as well as being the book for the life to come. The book of Revelation is the book of the suffering church in the world as well as the triumphant one, who awaits the Second Coming of her Christ, and it is also a book pertaining to the life to come.
- The two books reveal the seals opened by the Lord to declare His mysteries to those who fear Him, however some of the mysteries are still sealed (Rev 5, 10:4; 22: 4; Dan 12: 4).
- St. John described the Lord Jesus as having His head and hair white like wool (Rev 1: 14), same description of the Lord as presented by Daniel (Dan 7: 9).
- The two books gave similar description of the divine throne surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of angels (Dan 7:9, 10, Rev 4: 2, 9; 5: 11).

- In the book of Daniel, God has condemned Belshazzar (Dan 5: 22-23) for the same reasons upon which He condemned some people in the book of Revelation (Rev 9: 20).
- St. John saw a man standing on the sea raising up his hands to heaven and swearing by Him who lives forever and ever (Rev 10:5-6), and this was the same vision seen by Daniel (Dan. 12:7)
- The two books raised the question of the length of a time, times, and half a time (three years and a half or 1260 days) (Rev 11: 3; 12:6; Dan 7: 25; 12: 7).
- St. John described Satan as a dragon whose tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth (Rev 12: 4). It is similar to the description of Satan in the book of Daniel (Dan 8: 10).
- The two books are identical about the Antichrist.
- The two books are similar in their description of the Day of Judgment and the opening of the books (Rev 20: 12; Dan 7: 10).

DANIEL AMONG THE MAJOR PROPHETS

1. The books of the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel) are keen to reveal the personality of the King. However, the books of the twelve Minor Prophets are interested to reveal the heavenly kingdom, although it is hard to separate Messiah the King from His kingdom or His Church, which is His Body.

2. Two of the Major Prophets, Isaiah the aristocratic man and Jeremiah the suspended priest from the village, practiced their prophetic ministry in the Promised Land. The other two Major Prophets practiced their ministry in the land of captivity: Ezekiel, a priest on the riverbanks of Chebar, and Daniel, a statesman in Babylon. Josephus, the historian, mentioned that Daniel's parents were noble royal descendants. Thus, the word of God can reach any person wherever he is and in whatever social spheres.

The Major Prophets presented a perfect living picture for **the personality of the Spiritual King** who establishes His kingdom among the human race.

Isaiah lived during the flourishing period of Judah; therefore, he lifted our hearts to the divine throne so we may realize that the secret behind our true prosperity is the fellowship in the eternal glories through the divine grace.

Jeremiah lived during the era of the last kings of Judah, where evil prevailed; thus he came to declare God's hatred for sin, ascertaining that God has surrendered His people, city and temple to the enemies for chastisement.

Ezekiel served a group of captives in Babylon, who, in spite of the hard experience of estrangement from the homeland and their deprivation from the ministry of the temple, were not chastened. As a priest, he was also deprived of this ministry. Therefore, God made him enter the temple of the New Testament to see the glory of the house of God, not through the letter of Moses' Law but rather through the advent of the Messiah to the world to establish a new temple with surpassing divine capabilities.

Daniel, however, served in the palace of Babylon, the greatest city at that time, and it seemed that there was no hope for the return of the people neither to their homeland nor to the holy Temple of God and the sacrifice. Thus, his prophecy uttered about God's spiritual kingdom despite the resistance of the Gentiles (Babylon, Medes and

Persia, Greece, and Rome). This resistance will not stop until the Antichrist comes, who thinks he can completely uproot the Messiah's kingdom but soon finds himself crawling down and the Lord rules eternally with His saints in the heavens.

	Isaiah	*Jeremiah*	*Ezekiel*	*Daniel*
Date	**Through the glory of Judah.**	**At the end of Judah.**	**Among the captives.**	**In the royal palaces.**
Aim	**Divine glory.**	**God resists sin.**	**Revealing God's Person. God serves man.**	**God, the controller of history. All nations are in His hands.**

THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK

The book took a prophetic historical approach regarding the Gentile world, starting with Nebuchadnezzar until the time of the Antichrist and the end of the world[1].

The book is divided into a historical part, which is full of visions and prophecies, and a visionary prophetic part, which is full of historical events.

First: The Historical Part: Chapters 1 - 6

This part represents a historical dark night of violence and corruption, during which an empire is built on the debris of another, and everybody is resisting God's work. However, God, who allows evil to prevail for a short period of time, condemns it for the sake of the small elected minority. The following historical chapters are there to condemn evil:

1. The ascetic life of Daniel condemns the pagan luxury: **Ch. 1**
The three young believers and the delicacies of the king.
2. Daniel's heavenly wisdom condemns the wisdom of the world: **Ch. 2**
The statue of Nebuchadnezzar the great.
3. The boldness of the captive youths condemns the fire of injustice: **Ch. 3**
The three youths in the fiery furnace.
4. The chastity of Daniel condemns the capabilities of Nebuchadnezzar: **Ch. 4**
The chastisement of the proud Nebuchadnezzar
5. The purity of Daniel judges the defilement of Belshazzar: **Ch. 5**
Belshazzar and the secret writing.
6. The honesty of Daniel judges the injustice**: Ch. 6**
Daniel in the lions' den.

Second: The Prophetic Visionary Part: Chapters 7 -12

This part carries enlightened prophecies, which instill hope in the middle of tribulations and sufferings, until the believers depart from the world to join the fellowship of the eternal glory.

There were prophecies, which determined the time of the birth of Christ, the time of his crucifixion, and also the events of the end of the world[2]. He talked about the establishment of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus, as well as the opposition of the enemy, the antichrist, especially during the last days. He also prophesied about the Second

[1] *Boyd's Bible Handbook, P. 307.*

[2] الأنبا ديسقورس الأسقف العام: بحث في تفسير المعادلات الزمنية التي في سفر دانيال؛ القمص بيشوى كامل: دانيال صديق الملائكة، ابريل 1979.

Coming of the Lord Jesus, the eternal glory of the saints, and the judgment of the wicked. Some add to that the desolation of the temple by the hands of Titus the Roman. Also, he mentioned the prophecies pertaining to the history of the Jews and the four empires, that is the Babylonians, the Persians (Medes and Persians), the Greeks, and the Romans. He was called **the prophet of the later times**, whom God has granted to see the events of the future world, but moreover to reflect on the eternity. Thus, God's divine saying is, "His secret is to those who fear Him."

7. The four beasts and the Ancient of Days: chapter 7

8. The vision of a ram and a goat: chapter 8

9. The seventy weeks prophecy: chapter 9

10. Vision of the Glory of God: chapter 10.

11. Prophecies concerning Persia, Greece, and the end of the world: chapter 11

12. The great tribulation and the resurrection: chapter 12.

Third: The continuation of Daniel: chapters 13, 14 from the Septuagint.

We can also divide the book into four parts:

1. **Glimpse of Daniel's character**: chapter 1

2. **Daniel explaining the vision of the kings**:

Nebuchadnezzar: chapters 2-4.

Belshazzar: chapter 5

Darius: chapter 6

3. **The angel explaining Daniel's visions**: chapters 7-12

4. **The continuation of Daniel**: chapters 13,14.

DANIEL AND ARCHEOLOGY[1]

1. Robert T. Boyd said that there was an important invention in Babylon, regarding the ruins of a college, library, and a program to train citizens to explain dreams and visions. It was recorded that:

A. Those who deny the gods are thrown alive in the fiery furnace.

B. Those who object the king are thrown in the lion's den.

2. Records were discovered that it was the custom for Nebuchadnezzar to order everyone to worship the great statues.

3. The furnace was found in the diggings and was imprinted on it these words: "Here was the place of burning those who blasphemed against the gods of the Chaldeans."

4. It was written in the book of Daniel that Belshazzar was the last king of Babylonian kings (chapter 5). However, it was found written on a piece of clay that Nabonidus was the last of the kings of Babylon, and the Persians allowed him to live disabled. The critics thought that there was a contradiction between the Holy Bible and the history, however, searching between hundreds of clay pieces, it was known that Nabonidus had a son called Belshazzar, and he appointed him to replace him. This was the custom at that time, for when the Persians attacked Babylon; Nabonidus was at his castle away from Babylon, while Belshazzar was captured. What the king said to Daniel, "And shall be **the third ruler** in the kingdom" ascertained this. (Dan 5: 16) That is Daniel will be the third man after Nabonidus and Belshazzar. This proves the accuracy of

[1] *Boyd's Bible Handbook, p. 311-2.*

what was mentioned in the book of Daniel.

5. Some remnants of the lions' den, where Daniel was thrown, were found with this inscription: "This is the place where the wild beasts kill those who do not obey the king."

6. The diggings showed that there were writings on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace. Because of the white color of the plaster, anything dark was very apparent on it. This corresponds with what was mentioned in the book of Daniel chapter 5: 5 when the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace[1].

DIFFERENT CURRICULA FOR INTERPRETATIONS

There are many interpretations for the prophecies and visions of Daniel:

1. **The Patristic interpretation**: prevailed during the early Church Fathers, which interprets that the golden statue in chapter 2 refers to the four kingdoms (Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greece, and Romans). In the last kingdom, the iron is mixed with the ceramic, referring to the mixing of various Gentiles with the powerful paganism of Rome. The visions of the four beasts (chapter 7) came to correspond with that. The ten horns mentioned in this vision are either ten kings or ten divisions of the Roman Empire.

2. **The Anti-Papacy interpretation**, or the Protestant System; this assumes that Daniel the prophet and St. John have previously prophesied about the papal authority[2]. The followers of the anti-papacy interpret "the small horn" as the Roman Pope[3]. Mr. Bush in his work "*Heirophant*" writes that the "small horn" is definitely the papal church authority[4], and that the Gothics and Charlesman have attained their role in this important vision. Many of the Protestants, especially Calvin, have rejected that interpretation.

3. **The future interpretation**: says that the prophecies of Daniel will be fulfilled in the future.

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[1] منشورات النفير: تفسير الكتاب المقدس، جـ4، ص 337.

[2] *John Calvin: A Commentary on Daniel (Banner of Truth Trust), Oxford 1985, p. 40.*

[3] *Ibid, p. 42.*

[4] *Hieraphant, N.Y 1844, p. 109.*

THE BOOK OF DANIEL AND THE CRITICS[1]

THE BOOK OF DANIEL AND PORPHYRY (*Prophyrius*)

Until the seventeenth century no one denied Daniel's authorship to this book except Porphyry, a Greek philosopher. He was non-Christian, following Plato and lived in the third century (233-304 A.D.). **St. Jerome and Methodius** and others refuted him.

Porphyry was born in Tyre in Syria, and became a disciple of Longinus in Athens then went to Rome, and there became a disciple of Plato, the famous philosopher. He learned his ideas and did historical and philosophical research. In his defense of polytheism and local religions and worship of famous gods, he found that his greatest enemy is Christianity. He went to Sicily and stayed there a short period from 268 till 271 A.D. for health reasons. Then he went to Rome after the death of Plato around 270 A.D., and he was in charge of his school until he died[2]. He thought that he could eradicate Christianity from its roots, so he wrote 15 books under the name "***Against the Christians***." He concentrated all his attacks on the Bible, as a whole, and specifically on the book of Daniel. Eusebius of Caesarea refuted all his writings in 25 books, and unfortunately, all these books were lost. **St. Jerome[3], Socrates[4] and Philostorgius[5]** referred to them.

Porphyry vigorously attacked this book for he does not believe in the divine inspiration or in the prophecies or in the miracles. This book prophesied in details about the kingdoms and kings, whom he identified some. He prophesied about the Persians, who no one could ever imagine their victory over the great empire of Babylon. He also prophesied about the Greeks, who had no political status at that time and about the character of Alexander the Great before his coming for about 225 years. When Alexander came to Jerusalem attacking the Jews, the high priest offered him the prophecies of Daniel and his victories, so he was astonished and worshiped God. What amazed the atheist philosopher were Daniel's precise timing of the divine incarnation and the resurrection of the righteous and the judgment.

In the seventeenth century, the English Deism appeared which called that religion can be built on the mind only, thus accepted the existence of God but rejected the Christian faith as well as the Holy Bible as a revelation about God. Since that time till now, some liberal scholars refuse to give Daniel credit for writing this book in the sixth century B.C. They consider this book written in the second century B.C., during the period of Maccabees (168 - 164 B.C.), most probably during the era of Antiochus the fourth or Antiochus Epiphanes (175 - 163 B.C.).

Gleanson L. Archer[6] states that with the exception of Isaiah, there is no one who challenges the rationalists, who depend on the mind only and reject the idea of divine inspiration, like Daniel. His book contains prophecies about the seven years when Nebuchadnezzar became crazy (chapter 4), and the fall of Babylon before Persians and

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[1] . *J.E.H. Thomson, "Daniel" in Pulpit Commentary, p xliii; Robert H. Pfeiffer: Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 755.*

[2] *Angelo Di Berardino: Encyclopedia of the Early Church, Oxford 1992, vol. 2, p.704.*

[3] *De vir illus. 81, Ep. 70.*

[4] *H.E. 3:23.*

[5] *H.E. 8:14.*

[6] *Gleanson L. Archer: Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, 1982, p. 282.*

Medes (chapter 5). It also contains prophecies in the long range like prophesying about the four consecutive kingdoms (chapter 2), and emphasizing the end of times (chapter 7,8), specifically the third kingdom. He also prophesied about the first advent of the Lord and the seventy weeks (chapter 9) and a detailed demonstration about the conflict between the two empires and the two small horns. (Chapter 11)

The liberal critics depended on the following proofs:

First: The most important reason for their doubts is what was mentioned about consecutive empires. What Daniel had revealed about the future was recorded as if he lived it and as if it had happened. He prophesied in details about the events of the three centuries before the birth of Christ. When these prophecies were fulfilled, what the contemporary historians wrote corresponded to the events, which drove the liberal critics to claim that the book was written after the establishment of these empires, and they severely attacked the book. In fact, those liberal critics reject the "Holy Bible;" moreover they reject God Himself as the Pantocrator or the Almighty who controls all the events of history. Hence, those liberal critics attempted to remove the sanctity of the word of God as a divine word revealing the future.

Porphyry, who attacked Christianity, Judaism, and the Holy Bible, used this reason. **St. Jerome** said that when Porphyry saw that all what Daniel had written was fulfilled, claimed that the book was written as a historical record, after the events had been fulfilled. Thus, the attacks of Porphyry ascertained the preciseness of Daniel[1].

Writing detailed historical prophecies is not strange in the Holy Bible, for Abraham had prophesied about events, which happened through the five centuries. God told Abraham, "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward, they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation, they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."(Gen 15: 13-16) This statement carried precise prophecies:

- The birth of Isaac, the son of the promise; for Abraham's descendants were slaved in Egypt for about four hundred years.
- In their exodus, they will carry much.
- God condemned the nation, which enslaved them, for Pharaoh and his soldiers drowned in the sea.
- Their return to Canaan under the leadership of Moses and Joshua.
- The defeat of the Amorites.

All these events were fulfilled in the following five centuries.

The reason that Daniel presented all these details, more than other prophets did, was because that the time of the coming of the Christ had approached. The promise that Adam and Eve took from God seemed obscure (Gen 3: 5), and was given in more details during the era of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He promised Abraham saying, "And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Gen 12: 3, 18: 18, 22: 18, 26: 4) This promise became clearer during the time of David (about 1000 B.C.) when we hear about

[1] *PG 25:619-620.*

the coming of the Messiah as the King whom the rulers attack, and when the Psalmist prophesied about the events of the cross (Ps 22). After about three centuries, Isaiah prophesied about the birth of Christ from a virgin (Is 9: 6,7), and about the crucifixion (Is 53). Then Daniel came to declare the time of His coming and that it would be preceded by conflicts of great kingdoms. Hence, what was mentioned in the book of Daniel exactly corresponds with the spirit of the Holy Bible and its unity.

Second: The miracles, like the deliverance of the three youths from the fiery furnace and the deliverance of Daniel from the lions' den. But anyway, those critics reject the concept of miracles. If miracles were mentioned in the book of Daniel, they were mentioned for a purpose and not just to show God's power and authority. The purpose was to chastise God's people by captivity that is liberating them from the pagan worship and its defilement, so they may cleave to Him and trust in His care, power and wisdom. It was also written for the edification of the Babylonians, whom Daniel lived among.

Among these miracles were:

*. The revealing of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's interpretation (Dan 2). God declared to the proud king how weak he is in front of a simple dream, and that God the Almighty knows even the thoughts of man and his dreams.

*. The deliverance of the three youths from the fiery furnace (Dan 3). This declares God's surpassing love to his believers, thus He controls nature, and so He can change the fiery furnace into a place of rest.

*. The expulsion of Nebuchadnezzar to the wilderness to live with the animals (Dan. 4). Its purpose was to ascertain the work of God who destroys pride, to raise us as sanctified souls who may get attached to Him and share His glory according to our free will.

*. Writing on the wall during the banquet, which was characterized by defilement (Dan 5). Its purpose was to condemn sin, for there is no one who is above the divine justice.

*. Deliverance of Daniel from the lions' den (Dan 6): This declares God' s great care for the faithful believer, thus He can change the den of hungry lions to a joyful heaven so the believer can meet with the angels and enjoy the heavenly ministry.

Third: The critics attack the book because of **the visions**, claiming that these visions are false. But this is unrealistic, for if some fake coins exist in any generation, this does not mean that there are not true coins. Thus, if some fake visions exist, this does not mean that all visions are false. Abraham, the Patriarch, saw a vision, and Jacob saw a vision of the ladder reaching heaven. Also, in the book of Zechariah, some visions are mentioned, and in the New Testament, there is a book of "Revelation" full of visions, which many consider as an extension and confirmation to the book of Daniel.

Fourth: The book of Ecclesiasticus (The Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach, (about 170 B.C.) referred to the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the twelve Minor Prophets and did not mention Daniel. In the same book, it was mentioned that "there was no man like Joseph" (Sirach 49: 15), thus they think that no one who knows Daniel can utter that for he is like Joseph.

To refute that[1],

1. The proof is very weak, for mentioning the Minor Prophets after Isaiah,

[1] *J.H. Raven: O.T. Introduction, p. 319.*

Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, (Sirach 49: 8-10), is very natural, for the book of Daniel in the Hebrew origin was among a collection called "*Ketobeem*," and not among the collection "Prophets." Daniel did not present himself as a prophet but as a captive youth who had grace in front of the chief eunuchs in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. Most of his life, he lived away from his nation, and in Babylon, he was not known as a prophet nor as a spiritual worker among the captive Jews.

2. Not mentioning the name "Daniel" in the book of "Ecclesiasticus" does not mean that he did not exist. None of the scholars have denied the existence of the book of Ezra, in spite of not mentioning his name when referring to Zorobabel, Jeshua the chief priest and Nehemiah. Also, Ecclesiasticus never mentioned Job or the twelve judges like Gideon, Samson, and Deborah, nor mentioned the names of kings like Asa, Jehoshaphat. Does this mean that these were fake personalities that did not exist? The scrolls of Qumran (the Dead Sea scrolls) have identified the popularity of Daniel at his time.

3 Ecclesiasticus has explained the statement regarding Joseph, "No one was born like Joseph, the chief of his brothers and people, whose bones were transferred and after his death prophesied." If Daniel and Joseph were similar, both being strangers in palaces, yet Daniel did not resemble Joseph in the three areas mentioned in the book of Ecclesiasticus.

Fifth: Why were the late prophets like Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, not affected with what was written in the book of Daniel, as long as it was written in the previous age? To answer that, there was a great difference between the purpose of what Daniel wrote and what the other prophets wrote.

Sixth: Not mentioning the name Daniel in the Babylonian and Persian records as a proof of his not existing. To refute that, many of the great leaders were not mentioned in the history records like the ministers, or generals in the army or those who built the pyramids.

Seventh: What was mentioned in the book of Jeremiah (25: 11-12; 29: 10) means that the book of Daniel was written after accepting the book of Jeremiah as a legal book, and that was after the era of Daniel. To refute that, it was enough that Daniel had this book or he even may have known the words of Jeremiah from his parents, especially they were from noble families or from the royal family.

Eighth: Regarding the language: there were three Greek words for musical instruments and some Persian words. This means that the book was written after the establishment of the two empires: the Persian and the Greek; thus considering that what was recorded as prophecies were just history that was fulfilled. To refute that:

1. If Daniel had lived before the Greek culture was at its peak, however this culture had started very early and had its influence because of the colonies in the seventh century before Christ. In the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, there were some Greek armies and Egyptian army too who fought in the battle of "Carchemish" in the year 605 B.C.

2. In Nineveh, there were some Greek families since the year 700 B.C. It was very easy for Nebuchadnezzar to capture those Greek musical instruments[1].

3. Harrison said that the names of those musical instruments seem to be Greek, however, their origin may go back Mopsuestia[2].

4. The role of the Aramaic as business middlemen between Egypt and Greece, and

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[1] *Coleman Luck: Daniel, Moody Press, 1958, p. 9ff.*

[2] القس عبد المسيح بسيط أبو الخير: إعجاز الوحي والنبوة في سفر دانيال. *Harrison: Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 1162.*

between Babylon and the East, could not be ignored. This made them use some foreign expressions in the midst of their language. Some scholars like Charles Boutflower in his writing "In and Around Daniel" presented historical lists of the exchange of men, soldiers, craftsmen and others[1].

5. Some critics thought that the Chaldean expressions in the book are Aramaic, which date back to the sixth century B.C. However, the new discoveries and studies contradicted that[2], for it was proven that the language of the book was very old and dates back to the sixth century before Christ. Gleanson Archer[3] thought that the language of the book does not correspond with the era following the Persian era, by comparing the language of the book and the language of the Dead Sea scrolls. It is very clear from the language of the book that it is older than the language of the dead sea scrolls, and which dates back to the sixth or fifth century before Christ, and it was written in Eastern region which spoke Aramaic like Babylon and not Palestine.

It is worthy to note that the Aramaic expressions corresponded with the origin of the Aramaic words since the ninth, eighth, and seventh centuries before Christ, as well as the Aramaic of the Egyptian Papyrus which were discovered in the island of "Elephant" near Aswan and which go back to the fifth century before Christ. The book of Daniel had a combination of Hebrew, Babylonian, and Persian words like what were found on the Papyrus of the fifth century before Christ. These were much different than the Aramaic of "Nebtain" which did not contain any Persian, Hebrew or Babylonian words. However, they were full of Hebrew expressions, and they were different from the Aramaic of Balmera (Tadmer), which were full of Greek words, some Persian words, without Hebrew or Babylonian words[4].

The language of the book does not correspond the era of Maccabees, for the Hebrew language was not used as a living language, because Aramaic replaced it. Some expressions were similar to what were mentioned in the book of Ezekiel, which was written during the captivity in the sixth century before Christ. Also, the Aramaic language in the book of Daniel was different than the accent that was prevailing during the Chaldean translation of the Old Testament, and is much closer to the language of the book of Ezra which was written very close to the era of Daniel[5].

Studies done by Rosenthal[6] have confirmed that the Aramaic language used in the book of Daniel was the same language, which was spoken in the palaces and embassies since the seventh century before Christ, and it was wide spread in the Far East.

6. Some object that his Hebrew language used in the book of Daniel was very weak. To refute that, we say that we cannot expect from a very young captive who was lived in the Babylonian palace, with Babylonian education, to know Hebrew that well.

7. Regarding the Persian words, it was proven that many of the words, which the scholars thought they were Persian, had a Babylonian origin. Most of the words referred to by the critics as Persian, were titles or artistic expression, which could have crossed from the Medes to Babylon during the days of Daniel.

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[1] *W.A. Criswell: Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel, vol.1, p. 31.*
[2] *Cf. Robert Dick Wilson: Book of Daniel 1SBE, 2, p.785.*
[3] *Gleanson L. Archer: Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, 1982, p. 282.*
[4] دائرة المعارف الكتابية: بند دانيال.
[5] *Cf. Dr. Kitto: Encyclopedia of Biblical Literature; p. 620.*
[6] *cf. Harrison: Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 1124-26.*

G. L. Archer[1] said that the fifteen Persian words mentioned in the book of Daniel were a proof that the writer was very much associated with the Persian era. He did not use except three Greek words, which were names of musical instruments, which was a proof that the writer was before the Greek era.

Ninth: Some claim that there were some historical errors. Dr. Robert Dick Wilson, one of the Hebrew scholars in this age, refuted those claims. Please refer to the "International Standard Bible Encyclopedia."

1. It was mentioned in Daniel 1: 1 that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, while Jeremiah mentioned that this besiege was in the fourth year of the king. (Dan 1: 1)

2. Daniel lived until the first year of King Cyrus (1: 21) and he saw the vision in the third year of the same king. (10: 1; 1: 21)

3. What came in Daniel about "the law of Medes and Persians" (6: 8) corresponded with the truths that were revealed in the archaeology and with the writings of the book itself, assuming that Darius reigned during the same time of Cyrus.

4. Daniel saw the vision in the third year of Belshazzar the king (8: 1) as the last Babylonian king, while in history, it was known that Nabonidus was the last Babylonian king (refer to Daniel and archaeology).

Tenth: Geographical objections:

1. It was mentioned that Shushan submitted to Babylon, while some see that it submitted to Medes. Winkler said that when dividing the Assyrian states between the Medes and the Babylonians, Elam submitted to Babylon and not to Medes. Also, Daniel saw the vision in Shushan.

2. Nebuchadnezzar would not besiege Jerusalem leaving the Egyptian army at Carchemish, exposing himself to danger if defeated at Babylon. To refute this, the region "Carchemish" was not near "Seresyom" but at Jirabis, about 150 miles from the Euphrates.

3. Darius appointed 120 satraps (governors). He could have appointed more, for King Sargon, king of Assyria, ruled over 117 nations and appointed governors too.

PROOFS OF THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE BOOK

1. Inner proof[2]

It was very clear from the writings that Daniel, the prophet and the writer of the book who lived in the sixth century before Christ and lived in Babylonian palace in Babylon for tens of years:

A. The writer very precisely knew the history of the city, its customs, and the way of living.

B. The writer knew all the ranks of the scholars in Babylon, which were "the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans." (2: 2)

C. The writer knew very well the way of those scholars in interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas (5: 12), and their religious thoughts "the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh" (2: 11)

D. The writer used the picture of the beasts especially the lion which had eagle's wings (7: 3,4), which referred to Babylon.

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[1] *Gleanson L. Archer: Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, 1982, p. 284.*

[2] القس عبد المسيح بسيط أبو الخير: إعجاز الوحي والنبوة في سفر دانيال، 1995، ص 29.

E. Mentioning some detailed matters which could not be mentioned in a latter era like:

- The activities of Nebuchadnezzar during the construction. (4:30)
- Darius did not cast Daniel in the fiery furnace, but in the lions' den, because he worshiped the god "fire."
- The prophecy of Ezekiel was accepted as a contemporary to Daniel's (592 – 570 B.C.). Ezekiel referred to Daniel (28:3), who was contemporary to Daniel, and that is enough testimony that the book of Daniel was written during the days of Daniel (605 – 530 B.C.) [1].

2. **The impossibility that the book of Daniel could have been written during the era of the Maccabees**[23]:

A. The Book of Maccabees (written about 135 B.C.) referred to the book of Daniel as a legal book. It was impossible for the book to have been written in that era but in a previous era. We may question with Walvoord and say, how can the Jews who lived during the era of the Maccabees accept the book as part of the Holy Bible and refer it to Daniel, who lived four centuries before them, if the book were not written before their era and was already considered as one of the legal books of the Bible[4].

B. No prophet has ever lived during the period between Malachi the prophet, at the end of the fifth century before Christ and between John the Baptist, in the first part of the first century after Christ. The book of the Maccabees assures this fact: "Thus there was great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them." (1 Macc. 9:27) "And stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them." (1 Macc 4: 46) "And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest for ever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise." (1 Macc 14: 41)

The Jewish historian **Josephus**[5] said that from 464 – 442 B.C. until our present time, all the history was recorded. There was no succession of prophets as before, and there was no prophet since Malachi. Thus, it was impossible for them to accept a book and consider it as one of the legal books and consider Daniel as one of the heroes of faith.

C. The book of the First Maccabees testified to the righteousness of Daniel, "Daniel because of his innocence was delivered from the mouth of the lions." (1 Macc 2: 60) He also excerpted Daniel's prophecy about the abomination of Jerusalem (1 Macc 1: 29). It was impossible that the book of Maccabees mention Daniel the prophet with Abraham, David and others had the book been written in their days.

D. The scrolls of "Qumran," especially the two scrolls written in the Hebrew language in a cave Q 11, in the year 1956 A.D. that the book of Daniel was widely spread since the old days. Also, the scroll of "*Florililegium*[6]," and which referred to the book of Daniel and which had the words of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 24:15 that the book was

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[1] *Boyd's Bible Handbook, Oregon 1983, p. 307.*

[2] القس عبد المسيح البسيط أبو الخير: إعجاز الوحي والنبوة في سفر دانيال، ص 46 الخ.

[3] القس عبد المسيح البسيط أبو الخير: إعجاز الوحي والنبوة في سفر دانيال، ص 46 الخ.

[4] *J.F. Walvoord: Daniel, The Key to prophetic Revelation, p. 20-21.*

[5] *Against Apion 1:8.*

[6] *R.K. Harrison: Introduction to the Old Testament, p 1107.*

being read since the second century as a holy book inspired by the Holy Spirit. One of the scholars, Raymond K. Harrison, said that the scrolls of "Qumran," which included the book of Daniel, were all written at least half a century ago. Since the "Qumran group" was Maccabean that is from the Maccabees era, thus the writings of Daniel must have been written half a century older than the Maccabean era[1].

3. If this book was one of the fake books, it would not have been referred to Daniel, whom some scholars think that he is a fake personality, but would have been referred to one of the famous Jewish personalities, and the Jews would not have accepted it as one of their legal books of the Holy Bible.

4. The Septuagint which dates back to 280 - 180 B.C., considered this book as a legal book of the Holy Bible.

5. We know from Josephus that since the days of Christ, the Jews knew that Daniel wrote the book and that it is a legal book. Josephus[2] said that Alexander the Great went toward Jerusalem to punish the Jews for their loyalty to Darius, the king of the Persians. He led a great army and wanted to revenge from the Jews, but the high priest, Joiada, (Neh. 12:11 met him with other priests. This scene aroused Alexander the Great, for he had seen this in an earlier vision, thus he felt that this matter was from God. The high priest revealed to Alexander Daniel's prophecy, which declares that a Greek king will destroy the Persian kingdom, and this truly happened in the year 322 B.C. Alexander became a friend to the Jews treating them kindly, which was unusual. This proves that the Jews knew the book before Alexander and understood from its prophecies, that the Greek Empire will succeed the Persian Empire.

Also, the book itself referred that Daniel the prophet is the writer (7: 1; 8: 2; 9: 2; 10: 1,2; 12: 4)

Above all, the New Testament referred to the book of Daniel more than once. In (Matthew 24: 15), the Lord Jesus referred to "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel." There is another statement in (Mark 13: 14). So, The Lord Jesus Himself "The Truth" testified that Daniel is a true historical personality and a prophet, and the book was referred to him. *G. L. Archer*[3] said that the Lord Jesus did not refer to a book in the Old Testament by the name of Daniel, but referred to the person Daniel, where he used "*dia*" which refers to a human being. Thus, the Lord Jesus confirmed the existence of the personality of Daniel and that he wrote the book, and his prophecy about the abomination of desolation has not yet been fulfilled.

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[1] *Ibid 1118.*
[2] *Antiquities 7:11:8.*
[3] *Gleanson L. Archer: Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, 1982, p. 284.*

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

ENLIGHTEN MY EYES SO I MAY SEE YOU,
THE ALMIGHTY ONE!

- During this temporary captivity, let me see You, O the Almighty!
  I see You holding all history in the palm of Your hand,
  so I may trust You, O my Refuge!

- May great kingdoms arise, and may giants appear,
  but You alone are the King of kings and the Lord of lords.
  Your kingdom is eternal,
  which challenges all the evil powers,
  and destroys the antichrist and his followers!
  You come to me on the clouds to carry me with You,
  O the secret of my glory!

- May You draw all my depths amidst all the events,
  so I may see You controlling the whole world.
  I see You preparing a place for me in Your Fatherly bosom.

- May You raise me from the captivity to the freedom of glory of the children of God!
  Yours is the thanksgiving, the praise,
  O the Source of my joy!

Part One

THE HISTORICAL SIDE

(Chapters 1 – 6)

In this part, the Holy Spirit presents a true picture of the practical faith in the life of Daniel and his companions in Babylon, during the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus.

CHAPTER 1
STRANGERS IN THE PALACE

Judah was captive on three stages, during this time and until the end of the captivity was the darkest period for all the people. They lived in humiliation, strangers away from their country, deprived of worship in the Temple, and losing all dignity in the eyes of the Gentiles. But during that darkness, Daniel and his three companions were like shining stars. God takes care of them and uses them for His kingdom as witnesses of the truth, throughout all the generations.

1. The youths in captivity **1-4.**
2. Their choice to serve the king **5-7.**
3. Their rejection to the king's delicacies **8-14.**
4. The result of the test **15-16.**
5. Their enjoyment of wisdom and understanding **17.**
6. They surpass all the wise men **18-21.**

1. THE YOUTHS IN CAPTIVITY

The book starts by mentioning the first captivity of Judah in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, around the year 605 BC, by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, where he besieged Jerusalem and humiliated its king (2 Kings 24: 1; Jer 22: 19). He took some of the vessels from the house of God and brought them to Shinar to put them in the treasury of the house of his god.

"***In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it***" (1).

This captivity was in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim (Dan 1: 1), while in the book of Jeremiah chapter 25: 1 it was mentioned that this captivity took place in the fourth year of his reign. For the Babylonians and the Assyrians base their calculation on the year following the king's reign, while in Judah, it is calculated starting the year when the king had been enthroned, this is why there is a discrepancy of one year between the two dates[1].

Some scholars state that the word "***came***" [1] here in Hebrew means that the start of Nebuchadnezzar's movement as a the leader of the army to struggle against Necho, King of Egypt in the battle of Carchemish, while what is recorded in Jeremiah refers to his arrival to Jerusalem.

Nebuchadrezzar or Nebuchadnezzar is a Babylonian name, which means "*Nebo, the protector of the country borders,*" or "*O god Nebo, guard the borders,*" or "*O Nebo, preserve the succession of the king.*" But the word "*Nebo*" means "*broadcasting"* or *"press*." Nebo was the god of science and knowledge for the Babylonians[2]. The father of Nebuchadnezzar is Nabopolassar who founded the neo-Babylonian empire in the year 625 BC and who conquered the Assyrian empire. He sent his son to attack the pharaoh of Egypt in the year 605 BC in the battle of Carchemish (2 Kings 24: 7; Jer 46: 2). Then he came to Jerusalem and besieged it and captured some of its inhabitants, Daniel and his companions were among them**.** When Nebuchadnezzar heard of his father's death, he went back to Babylon to be enthroned. Notice that it was never mentioned that

[1] *Raven: O.T. Introduction, p. 319-320.*
[2] *New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, p. 655.*

Nebuchadnezzar was a king of Babylon during the captivity of Jerusalem. Berosus[1] mentioned that when Nabopolassar became old and was unable to lead his people, he gave the leadership of the armies to his son Nebuchadnezzar, thus he was a partner with his father in reigning over his people for at least two years.

The chronicle of Nebuchadnezzar is mentioned in the books of the first and second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel. His trace in Babylon corresponded with what is written in the Holy Bible.

"***And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, With some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; And he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god*" (2).**

The Babylonian captivity was accomplished on three stages:

1. **The first deportation**: in the year 606 BC or 605 BC, after the battle of Carchemish in which Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the Pharaoh of Egypt, then he went to Jerusalem, where Daniel and his companions were captured. Nebuchadnezzar took some of the vessels from the Temple and put them in the temple of Baal in Babylon, and left Jehoiakim on the throne as his successor and submitted to his authority.

2. **The second deportation**: in the year 598 BC or 597 BC, eight years after the captivity of Daniel. During that time, Ezekiel was captured. The kings of Judah, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, were revolted against Nebuchadnezzar, then the king came and took the rest of the vessels and treasures from the Temple, and captured King Jehoiakim with some other 10,000 noble men and military men. He did not leave anyone in Judah except the poor people. (Ezek 1: 1-3; 2 Chron 36: 10; 2 Kings 24 :8-20).

3. **The third deportation**: in the year 588 BC or 587 BC, where the king came for the third time to punish King Zedekiah for his rebellion. "*He burned the house of the Lord and the king's house; all the houses of Jerusalem, that is, all the houses of the great, he burned with fire*" (2 Kings 25:9). He also killed the sons of Zedekiah, the last of the kings of Judah, and he cast off the eyes of the king himself and led him bound in chains, thus the temple, Jerusalem, and all the Jewish community were destroyed (2 Kings 25: 1-7; Jer 34: 1-7).

All that was to fulfill the prophecy (2 Chron 36: 14-21), as a group chastisement because of the deviation of the people and their insistence for pagan worship, and their rejection to the voice of God through the prophets.

The first captivity was in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim, according to the Babylonian calendar, which ignores the first part of the year. This was not achieved because of the courage of Nebuchadnezzar nor because of his tight secure army plan, and not by coincidence, but by God's permission to chasten His people. This is what Daniel the prophet had emphasized.

❖ The truth about the defeat of Jehoiakim reveals that this victory was because of God's will and not because of the power of the enemies[2].]

St. Jerome

God had surrendered the king of Judah, his house and his holy vessels to be delivered by pagan hands to a pagan temple in Shinar. This was not a break in God's promise to Abraham and his descendants, as written in the psalm, "*This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it*" (Ps 132: 14). Then He put a

[1] *Josephus: Contra Apionem 1:19; Antiq. 10:11:1.*
[2] *PL 25:623.*

condition, "*If your sons will keep My covenant and My testimony which I shall teach them"* (Ps 132: 12).

God is willing to surrender His temple and His holy vessels to pagan hands to stimulate us to repent, to obey Him, and to draw us to His love, to become His temple, the living stones, and the holy vessels, whose portion is heaven.

"***The land of Shinar***" is an old name for Babylon, and also the tower which the old people had tried to build to reach heaven, and there God had confused their languages, and they called the land Babel which means "*confusion*."

St. Jerome explains, symbolically, the transfer of the vessels of the temple of God by Nebuchadnezzar. He said:

[It was not possible that the king of Babylon transferred all the vessels of the house of God and put them in the house of the idol, which he had built. He only transferred part of the vessels from the house of God. These vessels refer to the teachings of the truth. If you study all the works of the philosophers, you will definitely find parts of the vessels of God, for example, you will find in Plato that God is the Creator of the world. Also, Zeno, the head of the Epicureans, mentioned that there are people in Hades and the souls are immortal. Due to the fact that the philosophers mix truth with lies, and defile the good nature with many evils. Therefore, they have seized some of the vessels of the house of God and not all of them[1]] **St. Clement of Alexandria** and his disciple **Origen** have adapted this thought.

"***Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles' young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick understanding, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and who they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans*" (3-4).**

Some of the liberal critics think that the name of "***Ashpenaz***" was not mentioned in the old Babylonian records, and that Ashpenaz was not a historical personality. However, later, one of the scientists of the Assyriology discovered this name engraved on one of the bricks in the ruins of Babylon and it is now kept in the British Museum[2].

The king established an institute in his palace under the direction of Ashpenaz. This institute had probably many departments, one of which was related to the education of the sons of the Jewish nobles, according to their language. The establishment of this institute to graduate wise men to help the king shows how wise and broad-minded the king was. His choice of some of the youths from the descendants of the kings was for many reasons. One of them was his feeling of a victorious man who carries the noble men not to subdue them but to serve in his palace and manage the affairs of his country. Also, he was pushing them to submit to him and not to be revolted against him, defending their country. This gives the Jews a psychological relief that there is one in the palace who represents them.

These youths were characterized by the following:

- ❖ The nobleness of their genealogy.
- ❖ The beauty and strength of their body.

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[1] *PL 25:623-4.*

[2] *W.A. Criswell: Expository Sermons on The Book of Daniel, vol. 1.*

- ❖ The craftiness of their wisdom.
- ❖ Their knowledge.
- ❖ Their ability to educate others.
- ❖ Their ability to stand in the palace, to use their wisdom, knowledge, and understanding in their daily work.

In spite of their physical health, wisdom, and experience, yet the king wanted them to learn the language and culture of his country, so they may lose the sense of belonging to their own country. He did not destroy their talents, but wanted to direct their energies for the benefit of his palace.

What he meant by the "***Literature of the Chaldeans***" is to learn their language, culture, astronomy, mathematics, magic, and interpretation of dreams. As Moses learned all the wisdom of the Egyptians, so Daniel learned all the wisdom of the Chaldeans.

2. THEIR CHOICE TO SERVE THE KING

"***And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego***" **(5-7).**

It is very clear that Nebuchadnezzar carried the traits of a king, for he chose youths to be trained in the language and the literature of the Chaldeans, at the expense of the palace. Moreover, they eat from the delicacies of the king, not that he may brag about their beauty, but to counsel him and help him in managing the affairs of the country. He did not despise them because they were foreigners. In this respect, he was far advanced by many centuries, for he was not like King Ahasuerus (who was mentioned in the book of Esther), who appointed men to fulfill their lusts, but he chose youths to serve the society.

Why did the king order that they eat from his delicacies?

He was quite crafty in this regard, for he appears to be the king who treats generously his captives. However, he wanted, through the luxurious life, to attract them to him so that they may not revolt against him, and so that they may lose the sense of belonging to their country. So he wanted to destroy Judah through violence as well as with gentleness. Training for three years, the number three refers to the resurrection. The Lord Jesus Christ offered us His risen life to raise us to heaven, however, Nebuchadnezzar offered the youths three years of training not to raise them to heaven but to Babylon, so that they may die for their country and live with a new Chaldean thought.

The names of the four youths from the tribe of Judah were to remind them of their belonging to God and His presence with them.

"***Daniel***" means "*The Lord is my judge*."

"***Henaniah***" means "*Jehovah is kind and gentle*."

"***Mishael***" means "*who is like God or who resembles God*."

"***Azariah***" means "*Jehovah helps him*"

This shows the concern of the parents of those youths who had even chosen names to connect them to God, as it was mentioned in the book of Proverbs, "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*" (Prov 22: 6).

The chief of the eunuchs wanted those youths to sever any relationship with their past, their religion and their education. This is why he gave them new names to bring them closer to the Chaldean gods, Baal, the god of the sun, the goddess of beauty and earth, and the goddess of fire.

a. He called Daniel "*Belteshazzar*," which means "Baal's prince." Baal was the main god that the Babylonians worshiped.

b. He called Hananiah "*Shadrach*" which means "Inspired by the god of the sun."

c. He called Mishael "*Meshach*," which means "Through Shak," for the Babylonians worshipped Venus, under this name and he is the goddess of beauty and earth.

d. He called Azariah "*Abed-Nego*" which means "the servant of the goddess of fire."

It is not strange that the king wanted to change their names as he changed their language and education, like what the Pharaoh did with Joseph. (Gen 41). However, he was not able to change neither their hearts nor their thoughts away from God or His people and His holy places. But when the Lord Jesus Christ changed the name of Simon to Peter (Mk 3: 16), and the two sons of Zebedee to the sons of Boanerges, He renewed their inner depths to correspond with their heavenly mission, which He had prepared for them.

Daniel carried three names:

a. In the Hebrew language, he was called *Daniel*, for the Hebrews saw in Him God who judges the evil of the pagans.

b. In the Chaldean language, he was called *Belteshazza*r, for the Chaldeans or the Babylonians saw in him hidden power, so they considered him the private prince for their greatest god "Baal."

c. In the heavenly language, he was called, "*man greatly beloved*" (10:11,19; 9:23).

3. THEIR REJECTION TO EAT THE DELICACIES OF THE KING

"***But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs*" (8,9).**

Since Daniel was faithful to God, he was granted grace in the eyes of the chief of the eunuchs. David the Psalmist said: "*He also made them to be pitied by all those who carried them away captive*" (Ps 106:46). As God had hardened the heart of the Pharaoh to be glorified in the salvation of his people, he also granted grace in the heart of the chief of the eunuchs to be glorified in Daniel and the three youths. The Lord comforts us by touching the hearts of the people around us, either to use their tendency to violence or to change them to gentleness, so that all things work together for our good.

- The person who was captured because of the sins of his ancestors, was rewarded because of his virtues, for he had put in his heart not to defile himself with the delicacies of the king, but preferred a simple meal to a luxurious one. Therefore the Lord granted him grace and well being in the eyes of the chief of the eunuchs. In

difficult circumstances, the saints are loved by the unbelievers, because of God's mercies and not because of the goodness of the evil people[1].

St. Jerome

"***And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king. So Daniel said to the steward, whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants. So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them for ten days*" (10-14).**

Daniel lived in a strange country (the land of captivity), and **he could have had a good excuse not to fast**. Daniel was in a corrupted environment encouraging sin, for he was in the king's palace, and he had to eat from the king's delicacies and drink his wine. He fasted even in his old age (ch. 10), as if his heart did not get old.

Note that in Daniel's fasting:

1. Daniel fasted not only by abstaining from food, but he "***purposed in his heart***" **(8).** A spiritual life is enjoying an inner treasure, "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matt 6: 21). Thus, a true spiritual life stems from the depth of the heart, that even during the temptation, the believer can overcome it by God's grace and the strong holy will be inside him. Not only did he purpose in his heart, but also he transformed it into action. Worship starts from inside and it is also translated into action, so that the body shares with the soul, the action with the thought, and one practices his spiritual life with all his hidden and apparent being.

2. Daniel asked the chief of the eunuchs not to defile himself. This request was considered impossible, because it can put him in trouble and may cost him his life. Daniel believed that God is the Lord of the impossibilities who can work in the heart of this pagan man, as long as this matter touches the sanctity of his life and its purity. The chief of the eunuchs changed their names, but he was unable to change their hearts and their holy natures in the Lord.

Daniel considered the king's delicacies defilement. Why?

a. Because his brothers were deprived from this luxurious life, so how could he accept to live in the luxury of the palace while his brothers were in need?

b. What was offered on the table was unlawful food according to the Mosaic Law, like the meat of strangled and some unlawful animals. However, on the king's table, there must have been some lawful meat, which Daniel and his companions could have chosen from.

c. Those youths were afraid that the king's delicacies might make them forget their true positions as captives. They did not request the king's delicacies, but rather their freedom and satisfaction. Their hearts would not rest in a strange palace, but they longed to go back to their own country. No doubt, Daniel and his companions were groaning for all what had happened to God's people, the temple, and the holy city, so they kept an inner bitterness until God had pity on them and restored their captivity.

[1] *PL 25:625B.*

d. Daniel was afraid that some participants at the table have been addicted to the wine, so he completely rejected it, as was written. "*Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine, do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly*" (Prov 23: 30-31). Daniel probably considered himself a Nazirite to the Lord who does not drink wine or any similar drinks. (Num 6: 2-3). The priests were forbidden to use it before their ministries in the temple, (Lev 10:1-9), as well as the kings, too (Prov 31:4-5). Those youths were in bitter agony because of the captivity, so how can they drink wine, which was a symbol of joy? They did not use it so God may restore them from their captivity.

❖ Blessed are those who keep the covenant of their fathers and do not disobey the Law given by Moses, but fear God. In spite of their captivity in a strange land, they were not enticed by delicious meat nor by attractive wine nor by the glory of the princes, but instead they kept their mouths holy and sanctified and praised the Heavenly Father[1].

St. Hippolytus of Rome

❖ Whoever did not want to eat nor drink from the king's delicacies lest he gets defiled (knowing that the wisdom and teachings of the Babylonians were wrong), surely cannot utter any evil word[2].

St. Jerome

Daniel debated his principle of fasting with courage and gentleness, in the spirit of humility and not with self-righteousness. The true religious life is to practice moderation; so one may not live in humiliation, nor with violence; with no respect for others, or in haughtiness feeling that he is more righteous than others.

Daniel was characterized with wisdom, sobriety and faith, knowing that God is the One who works in the hearts of people. There was a hidden element in this debate, which was "God's interference for our own spiritual good." It was so obvious from verse 9 that the fruit of this debate was not due to Daniel's personality but to God's mercies, who gave him grace in the eyes of the chief of the eunuchs. God is in control of the hearts of those who rule us, even if they are non-believers or tend to be violent. "*The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it whenever He wishes*" (Prov 21:1).

God wants us to enter into dialogue with Him as Abraham, Moses, David and others did.

3. Daniel and his friends were serious about fasting without weariness for ten days; thus the Lord rewarded them ten times. He gave them a better countenance, and they became in much better health than all the others. This was a gift from God, for it is written, "*Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord*" (Deut 8:3).

❖ They knew that the earthly meat does not grant people beauty and strength but rather God's grace which is granted by His Word[3].

St. Hippolytus of Rome

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[1] *Scholia on Daniel 1:8.*
[2] *PL 25:625A.*
[3] *Scholia on Daniel 1:12.*

He gave them knowledge, understanding and wisdom, for the moderate spiritual fasting does not weaken the mind but rather strengthens it and helps it grow.

4. This book presents us a lively picture about the fasting of Daniel, who used to eat only beans, (12), and no meat (Dan.10:3). He abstained form every luxury; he did not drink any wine nor did he anoint himself (Dan 10:3). David the Psalmist practiced fasting the same way, for he said, "*My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness*" (Ps 109:24). Repentance accompanies fasting (Dan 10:2).

❖ His faith was so great to the extent that he promised them that he will be in better health, once he eats the fasting food, and he determined the time too. This was not being too hasty in acting, but rather great faith; he despised the delicacies of the king[1].

St. Jerome

4. THE RESULTS OF THE TEST

***"And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables* (beans)" (15-16).**

We do not know the number of youths who served the king, however only the four names, Daniel and his three friends, were mentioned. Since they were serious in their faithfulness to God, in spite of the difficult circumstances, they were the only ones who deserved to have their names mentioned in the Holy Bible and to be found engraved in the book of life.

5. THEY WERE TALENTED WITH WISDOM AND UNDERSTANDING

"***As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams***" (17).

God had fulfilled His promises with His believers, "*For those who honor Me, I will honor*..." (1 Sam 2:30).

❖ Notice that it was written that God gave the young men knowledge in all literature and in all branches of wisdom[2]]

St. Jerome

God had selected Daniel, not only from the rest of the people but also from his peers, because He was preparing him for an important prophetic task. **St. Jerome** mentioned that God had given the four young men knowledge and skills, but He added another gift to Daniel, which was the understanding of all visions and dreams[3]. Daniel was distinguished with the spirit of prophecy, for God revealed to Him His plan. God had forbidden the use of magic to know the future (Deut 18:10), but He revealed some aspects of the future to His prophets for the edification of the His people and the glory of His holy name.

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[1] *PL 25:625C.*
[2] *PL 25:625C.*
[3] *PL 25:625C.*

6. THEY SURPASSED THE WISE MEN

"***Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, therefore they served before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm*"* **(18-20).**

The king could not have tested those youths unless he himself was highly educated and full of knowledge and wisdom. The king was pleased with them, but he did not bring them to the palace just for spending some time nor for having idle talks, but for helping him with the spirit of wisdom and seriousness.

God was glorified in His captured children, for they have surpassed their peers, the Chaldeans, who bragged that they were full of wisdom, considering others ignorant barbarians. Now the king admits that their wisdom is nothing compared to the abundant grace of God.

"***Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus***" (21).

This does not mean that Daniel did not stay except until the first year of King Cyrus, but this is to emphasize that Daniel was contemporary during the whole period of captivity, for in this year the Jews have returned to Jerusalem.

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (1)

IN THE BABYLONIAN PALACE

- May the enemy carry me to the Babylonian Palace,
  But he cannot cast my soul from heaven!
  May he offer me all the delicacies and luxuries,
  but he cannot snatch me from the heavenly table!
  Because I enjoy the food of the angels!
- Grant me to abstain from the love of the world,
  Then bless my body, soul, and mind.
  Help me with Your heavenly wisdom
  and reveal to me Your surpassing mysteries!
- As you were with Daniel in his sojourn in the palace,
  Let Your grace accompany me wherever I go!
  Grant me success in every task I undertake!

CHAPTER 2

THE VISION OF THE STATUE

It is very hard to express the feelings of Daniel and his three friends. Truly God has been glorified in them, and gave them grace in the eyes of the king who considered them wiser than all the other Chaldeans. They had grace in the eyes of everyone, were much honored and had all the capabilities, yet they felt imprisoned in the palace like the birds in a golden cage decorated with pearls. To them, freedom was much better than anything else.

God wanted to assure Daniel that all what had happened to him was not coincidence. The world, establishing kingdoms and destroying them, even man's dreams are all under God's control. Therefore, God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to see a terrifying dream, and all the human kind was unable to interpret it. But God revealed it only to Daniel, and it is summarized in one statement, that "**God controls the history and is concerned about the salvation of the world**"

God wanted to reveal that Daniel was distinguished with the spirit of prophecy, clarifying that God's mercy was working in him.

1. The history of the dream	**1**
2. The forgotten dream	**2-12**
3. The order to kill the wise men	**13**
4. Daniel's behavior	**14-18**
5. Revealing the secret	**19-24**
6. Encounter with the king	**25-30**
7. The metal statue	**31-33**
8. The strange stone	**34-36**
9. Interpretation of the dream	**37-45**
10. The glorified Daniel	**46-48**
11. Daniel's friends	**49**

1. THE HISTORY OF THE DREAM

"***Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him***" (1).

One would probably ask how can the dream be in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and Daniel had interpreted it while he was still receiving his training for a period of three years? Did he not stand before the king except after the three years? (1:5)

A. Three years refer to a part of the first year, the second year and part of the third year (Compare 2 Kings 18:9,10; Jer 34:14; Ps 8:31), where the first year of Daniel's training is part of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, and the second year is part of his second year of reign according to the Babylonian calculations[1].

B. Some people feel that the second year means after the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple, and the destruction of the Jewish community in the year 588 BC or 587 BC.

[1] منشورات النفير: تفسير الكتاب المقدس، جـ 4، ص 329.

C. The most acceptable opinion is that the first chapter took place at the time when Nebuchadnezzar was helping his father Nebopolassar in his reign. Here he means the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign when he was alone on the throne[1]. Nebuchadnezzar became a king with his father, as was the custom at that time. He, then, besieged Jerusalem as a partner of the king and a leader of the army, then he forsook Jerusalem and went to the battle of Carchemish because the Pharaoh had rebelled against him. His father was still living, and then he went and besieged Jerusalem again in the year 606 or 605 BC, where the first deportation happened. Then his father died and he became king. This story corresponds with what was mentioned in history, meaning that Daniel and his friends were receiving training for the wisdom of the Chaldeans during the last days of Nebuchadnezzar's reign as a partner of his father. Then during the second year of his reign alone, Daniel stood before him; this was after the training period.

St. Jerome said that what he means by the second year is that he reigned not only over the Jews and Chaldeans, but also over all the other Gentiles like the Assyrians and the Egyptians. Josephus[2] said that Nebuchadnezzar had a strange dream about the future after his victory over Egypt[3].

It is mentioned that **he had dreams**, in the plural form, although he had only one dream. The plural form was used because the dream had many subjects, or probably he had several dreams within different intervals bearing the same interpretation. However, the last dream was worrisome, that is why he called the wise men to ask them about the interpretation.

Why Nebuchadnezzar did not mention the dream to the wise men? **St. Jerome** answered: [The dream was in the king's heart like a shadow, an echo or trace, if others would repeat the dream before him, he can remember what he had seen, and they would not be able to trick him with lies[4].] What multiplied his worry was that he forgot the dream, so he needed someone to remind him of it. God who gave him the message through the dream made him forget, though usually people ignore the dreams that they forget.

Nebuchadnezzar was probably thinking of the future, asking guidance from the gods, therefore God revealed to him the times of the Gentiles. (Lk 21:24). He saw that his rule shall be destroyed, followed by many empires, which appear and disappear then God will rule forever. The king realized that these are unusual matters, and that there is a message coming directly to him. When he woke up he forgot the details of the dream, all what he could remember was that this strange dream is coming from heaven. He asked someone to remind him of the details and to reveal to him its interpretation.

God, who presented this dream, is the one who made him forget its details, so he became worried and asked the wise men and magicians to interpret it. This is exactly like what had happened with King Ahasuerus who had insomnia and could not sleep, then he looked at the chronicles, and God started the work for the salvation of His people from the wicked Haman. (Es. 6:1).

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[1] *G. Goleman Luck: Daniel, P. 26.*
[2] *Antiquites., book 10.*
[3] *PL. 25:627.*
[4] *PL. 25:627E-628.*

2. THE FORGOTTEN DREAM

These dreams are examples of God's work in secret for the benefit of His believers. **Tertullian**, in his discourse "*On the Soul*" differentiated between three kinds of dreams[1]:

A. Dreams from the devil: which may be seen as true and beneficial, yet they are deceiving.

B. Dreams from God: like what had happened with Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan, and that was to show God's great mercy upon the entire human race.

C. Dreams that are common in one's daily life, mostly as a reaction to one's behavior. At night, after the day's work, one remembers the events of the day, whether sad or joyful, and remembers them in the form of dreams. Thus, this old say: "hungry men dream of bread and thirsty men dream of water."

"***Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king***" (2).

"***Chaldeans***" mean the Babylonians in general, but later it meant only the wise men. Some liberal critics think that the word "Chaldeans" mean the people of Chaldea, and not just a segment of them. But A. W. Criswell said that the ancient discoveries proved that what was written in Daniel was correct, that the word "Chaldeans" meant a special segment of people who served the Baal or Bel.

It is obvious that the king felt that this dream carried a heavenly divine message. He had previously dreamt a lot, but never cared. But this time, he felt terrified and could not sleep, for he felt that the heaven is revealing to him something important, that is why he called all the wise men, magicians, and Chaldeans.

At the beginning, the magicians rejoiced that the king was calling them, for they thought that he was asking for their counsel, or that he will give them presents after they interpret the dream. They did not notify Daniel about the king's call, due to envy and jealousy. The Jews were wondering why Daniel and his friends did not go to the king. **St. Jerome** said that when the king promised gifts to the one whom would interpret the dream, Daniel and his friends did not care to stand before him because they did not care about the treasures and the glory of the Chaldeans. Also, the Chaldeans envied the Jews for their good reputation and honor, that is why they went alone to the king to get all the rewards for them. But afterwards, they asked for their help to solve such a disaster[2].

One of the reasons why the king did not call Daniel and his friends to interpret the dream although he had already tested them and found them ten times better than all the others (magicians and astrologers), who were in his realm (1:20), was that he did not completely trust their sincerity and loyalty to his kingdom.

Whether the wise men or the king were the cause, God allowed that so that they would not go with the magicians and astrologers. They had to be distinguished because they worked through the Spirit of God, and not by magic. Anyway, God separated them so that He is glorified in them.

"***And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream." Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, "O king live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation*" (3-4).**

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[1] *Cf. A Treatise on the Soul, 4-7.*
[2] *PL 25: 628D.*

The king admitted his ignorance to interpret the dream and his weakness before the message it carries.

When they told him, "***O king live forever***," this was not a mere salutation, but they saw worries on his face. They asked him not to worry, for they were absolutely confident that they could interpret the dream.

"But the king answered the Chaldeans in these words: "***My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces and your houses shall be made an ash heap*" (5).**

Although they talked with confidence that they can answer his request, yet they were surprised that he was asking something beyond their means and above their understanding. Those magicians and astrologers were like half gods, in the eyes of the rulers and the people. But now, they were humiliated because they did not know the interpretation. This was a fruit of their pride and haughtiness. This severe threat revealed the violence of the king and his brutality, besides it gave a chance to spreading the news on a large scale; thus God was glorified through His work in Daniel.

"***However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation***" (6).

Knowing that they were covetous and lovers of vainglory, the king promised them to honor them with gifts and rewards.

***"They answered again and said, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation." The king answered and said, "I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm. If you do not make known the dream to me, there is only one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation"* (7-9).**

The astrologers insisted to know the dream, and in pride, they ascertained that they would know its interpretation. The king showed another side of their crime, which was telling lies and corrupted words. Knowing that he had forgotten the dream and that they could not give its interpretation, they wanted to gain time until the king would calm down and forgive them. During the discussion between the king and the Chaldeans, the king doubted that they would know the interpretation because they were not truthful in their knowledge. They wanted to gain time until the king's anger would subside and would change his order of killing them.

The Chaldeans realized that only God would know the matters related to the future. We thank God for His love, for the Word of God came to tell us everything, as the Samaritan woman said, "*I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ. When He comes, He will tell us all things*" (Jn.4:25).

***"The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer or Chaldean"* (10).**

They presented just an excuse to the king that no one could ever do what he was asking, and that it had never happened before in the history of mankind. Thus, everyone had witnessed that if anyone could tell that dream, this would be a divine gift from God, for God is the only knows man's dreams and the inner thoughts. They had witnessed to the God of Daniel, even before Daniel uttered a word about God.

***"It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh"* (11).**

Some thought that they meant the angels who are the only ones who can tell that strange dream, which came as a divine revelation. The dream was omitted from the king's mind for a divine purpose, but his soul was still full of anxiety. Others thought that he meant the gods for the Chaldeans worshipped many gods, and the Supreme god was the ruler only.

***"For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave the command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon"* (12).**

The answer of the wise men did not comfort the king, but rather he became very furious and his threatening changed to a royal order to kill all the wise men of Babylon.

3. THE ORDER TO KILL ALL THE WISE MEN

***"So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them"* (13).**

Daniel and his companions were not called with the wise men when the king asked them to reveal his dream and interpret it. But when the order to kill was issued, they wanted them to be killed too. In spite of that injustice, Daniel and his companions did not hate them but Daniel saved them, without even rebuking them.

4. DANIEL'S BEHAVIOR

***"Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon; he answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel"* (14-15).**

It is obvious that some wise men were already killed before Daniel and his friends. This decree had a big impact on all the communities in the country.

When Daniel was ordered to death, he met with Arioch, the king's captain. He wanted someone to intercede on his behalf and on behalf of his friends to clarify to the king that the decree to kill them was unjust because they were not called with the wise men to reveal nor interpret the dream. He rebuked him with gentleness by saying, ***"Why is the decree from the king so urgent?"***

It is obvious from Daniel's words that he was not defending himself lest he dies, but he wanted what is good for the king. The sudden verdict of Daniel's unjust death did not make him lose his wisdom nor his calmness, and did not make him worry. The dream worried the king, but the verdict to kill Daniel did not worry Daniel because he felt that his life, his heart, his thought are under God's control and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He asked the king to give him some time so that God may reveal to him the secret. He asked with great confidence that God would provide him with all his needs. He knew that this request was risky, for if he would not know the answer, then his punishment would be multiplied.

"***So Daniel went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon"* (16-18).**

The Chaldeans asked for the dream to interpret it, but Daniel asked for some time to stand before the One who reveals the secrets.

"***Daniel went to his house***," this means that the king had agreed to give Daniel some time, maybe just one day, since he wanted the answer fast in order to be relieved from his worry. Daniel asked for this day to enjoy a divine revelation of the dream and its interpretation.

Given some time, Daniel did not go to the library to read nor did he ask his friends for counseling, but he asked his friends to pray for him. Daniel was so close to God, yet he felt that he needed many intercessions and supplications for him. Likewise, St. Paul used to ask the people to pray for him so that God may grant him wisdom, before uttering any word. Hence, trials led Daniel and his friends to deeper prayers and fellowship with God.

❖ Daniel did not ask for some time to seek the interpretation of the secrets by his own ability, but rather to ask the God of secrets. That is why he asked Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to pray with him, so that he would not be the only one to deserve the glory. They shared the risk; therefore they shared a general prayer[1].

St. Jerome

When Daniel talked with his friends, he said "***The God of heaven***" (18). He did not say the God of Israel, for he knew that Israel had sinned and did not deserve to have the name of God called upon it. This title was also mentioned in the books of Nehemiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, because they are all books related to the era of captivity. It seemed that God had forsaken His people for a moment, so that they would repent, then He would dwell in them. This title was also mentioned in the Book of Revelation, where our hearts are elevated up to heaven, where God carries us to His heaven, and thus He is called the God of heaven.

The three youths helped Daniel with their prayers, not to share with him a reward from the king, nor to remove his shame, but for the glory of God in His prophet in the land of captivity. The eyes of those righteous young men were directed toward the divine mercies, for only they help us during our tribulations.

5. REVEALING THE SECRET

God had allowed Daniel to go through this tribulation so that he may go to His house and meet the God of heaven, to lift his heart and thought up to heaven and discover deeper secrets, and enjoy knowledge, which surmounts all difficulties. We are in dire need to go to our house, the inner Jerusalem, to meet the One who transfers us from the cares of this world to the pledge of eternity.

"***Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven***" (19).

Since Daniel and his friends prayed with faith to God, God answered their prayers. As St. James said, "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man supposes that he will receive anything from the Lord" (James 1: 6-7). God is near to those who cry to Him in truth and sincerity with faith.

***"Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His"* (20).**

[1] *PL 25: 628D.*

After God revealed the secret of the dream to Daniel, he did not think to meet with the king, but he presented a new praise to the Lord, giving Him credit for wisdom and power. He glorified God the Almighty who is in control of everything and nothing is hidden from Him. "***He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding***" (21). Many admit the existence of God, His might, His wisdom, but they consider Him away from human's life, in general, and their life, in particular. However, Daniel praised God who works in the life of everyone. God is the source of power and wisdom and He never deprives us of them, as St. Paul said, "*To God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever*" (Rom 16: 27). When we obtain the Lord Jesus, we obtain wisdom.

Any contemporary man expects daily changes, so he reads the newspapers to be up to date with the news, watching for anything to happen. However, when God's people wake up any day, they realize God's plan in the salvation of the world. God is in control of all events, whether worldly or locally, whether church matters or personal matters. One praises God for all His surpassing care. A believer sees all movements in heaven, in nature, in all humanity, and in his private life, all praise the Almighty wise One. When he says, "He gives wisdom to the wise," it means that God granted men with natural wisdom, which is a divine gift. If one is faithful in his natural wisdom, giving the credit to God, then God will grant him more heavenly wisdom. If we are faithful in the little that we have then God will bless us more, for whoever has, more will be given.

"***He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him***" (22).

He is talking here about the gift of prophecy, where God lets His prophets interpret His secrets. This is a grace given to some faithful, for the edification of the community and for the glory of God.

God, living in the light, makes us enter into His light and destroys the kingdom of Satan that is darkness. What a difference between the magicians, the children of darkness and Daniel, the son of the light!

St. Augustine distinguishes between the joy of the revelation with the spirit and understanding with the mind. As we worship God in the spirit and mind (1 Cor 14:15), so Daniel the prophet realized the divine revelation with his spirit and discovered its understanding by his mind.

- The greatest prophets are those who are granted the two gifts, the gift of revelation in the spirit with symbolic comparisons of material matters, and the gift of understanding these matters with the power of the mind. Thus, it was Daniel who told the king his dream and also interpreted it. (Dan 2:27-4:16-24). God revealed to him the dream itself, with the spirit, and God revealed to him its understanding with the mind. The word "spirit" is used here with the same meaning as St. Paul used it when he distinguished between the spirit and the mind[1].

St. Augustine

***"I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king's demand"* (23).**

[1] *The Literal Meaning of Genesis, Book 12, ch. 9.*

Daniel is glorifying the God of his fathers, the God of the living church, which extends along all ages. God, who made wonders in the past with his fathers, works now from generation to generation and unto the end of all ages. **St. Clement of Alexandria** said that God is the One who grants wisdom, knowledge, and true philosophy. He said,

- The Holy Bible considers every science, art and skill from God. This is evident from the Scriptures: "Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "See, I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship" (Ex 31:1-3). Those who take their wisdom from God have multiplied understanding[1]]
- [God gives His own wisdom, understanding and support to the righteous people[2].
- [Before the Lord's coming, philosophy was essential for the righteousness of the Greeks, and now it leads to righteousness as a kind of training to proofs of faith[3].

St. Clement of Alexandria

***"Therefore, Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon and told him, "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon, take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation"* (24).**

Why Daniel asked Arioch not to destroy the wise men of Babylon despite the fact that they were magicians, followers of Satan?

I. He asked not because they were righteous people, but because the verdict was unjust, for no one can reveal the dreams except God.

II. They were not Jews who knew the law that forbids magic.

III. By not killing them, this will give them and their families a chance to realize God's true work in the lives of His prophets.

God answered Daniel's prayers very fast, and the first thing that Daniel did, even before going to the king, was to thank God. In the captivity, Daniel felt God's abundant care, for He the Almighty decides the times. After many centuries, the Lord Jesus came and the Jews did not arrest Him for they feared the multitudes. But God's plan was fulfilled, for at the Passover, He was crucified, to ascertain that He is the true Passover, in whom all the symbols were fulfilled.

St. Hippolytus of Rome commented on the revealing of the secret by saying, [The dream was kept secret for those who had the earthly mind, but those who seek the heavenly matters[4].] [God reveals to them the heavenly mysteries[5].]

St. Hippolytus of Rome said that the name Arioch literally means the chief of butchers or cooks.

6. MEETING WITH THE KING

***"Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation"* (25).**

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[1] *Stromata 1 : 4.*
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid. 1 : 5.*
[4] *Scholia on Daniel 2 : 3.*
[5] *Scholia on Daniel 2 : 10.*

Arioch presented Daniel to the king as the one who did good and deserved the reward, for he said, "***I have found a man***..." Daniel did not give himself the credit, but gave all the glory to God.

Daniel had previously asked if the king would give him some time to think of the dream and its interpretation, why then did Arioch tell the king about Daniel, as if the king does not know Daniel at all? Probably because the king had given Daniel only one day. The king had despaired that Daniel or any of the wise men would know the dream and its interpretation, thus he used the one-day request to justify the order of killing all the wise men, including Daniel.

"The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?" (26).

It is obvious that the king was desperate and wanted badly anyone to reveal the dream and interpret it. The king talked with Daniel telling him how impossible is it for anyone to tell him his dream. This showed more the surpassing work of God with Daniel, which glorified God.

***"Daniel answered in the presence of the king and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these"* (27-28).**

When Daniel started talking to the king, he clarified that the dream was prophetic, ascertaining that this was not a normal dream for human; and no man can interpret it. Therefore, God who showed the king this dream will reveal it with His Spirit.

God had revealed to him what will happen at the end of the days, where kings fall, until the King of kings come and establish His spiritual kingdom in the hearts.

***"As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be"* (29).**

Daniel stirred the king's feelings when he told him that his dream was not a normal one, but rather it was uplifting of his thoughts to know the One who reveals the secrets, who gave him this dream.

***"But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart"* (30).**

God, in His wisdom, has elevated the thoughts of the king to enjoy a private secret regarding the last days, but he was not able to understand the dream. However, Daniel knew the dream and its interpretation. Daniel gave the credit to God and not to himself. He told the king that God, who gave him the dream, granted him someone to interpret it, and all what is happening is due to God's divine plan.

Someone might ask, "Does God talk to us now in dreams?" God can do that, but He gives us what is greater, for St. Paul wrote, "*God has in these last days spoken to us by His Son"* (Heb 1: 2).

7. THE METAL IMAGE

"You, O king, were watching; and behold a great image! This great image whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome" (31).

Someone would probably ask why God showed this dream, pertaining to the four kingdoms which end by the coming of the Lord Jesus, to Nebuchadnezzar and not to Daniel?

I. If the dream were revealed to Daniel, all the Jews would not have known about it. But because it was revealed to the king, who was troubled and wanted to kill all the wise men, the magicians and the satraps, the dream was made known throughout the kingdom and to every Jew.

II. Since the dream pertains to the coming of the Lord Jesus, the Savior of the world, God wanted the Gentiles to learn about the coming of the Lord.

***"This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay"* (32-33).**

After Daniel related the dream, he did not ask the king: "Is this the dream?" But with great confidence, he believed that what God had said was true, thus he said: "This is the dream." The king listened to it with great astonishment and silence for Daniel has revealed the dream with great accuracy.

It is noted in this dream that:

1. The king saw a great royal image. In spite of the different metals in it, it is one image. All the kingdoms are consecutive, in spite of the various capabilities. In the eyes of God, it is one image, or one unit of time, very splendid in the eyes of those who benefit from it, but frightening for all those who fall under its pressure. The king did not see many visions or images, but one vision. The four kingdoms differ from one another and each kingdom was built on the fall of the other. The Persian kingdom was established on the decline of the Babylonian's; and the Macedonian's was established on the decline of the Persians; and the Roman Empire was established on the fall of the Macedonian. In spite of the differences of the kingdoms, yet they all share the rejection to the will of God, so they all resist the truth.

2. The head of the image was from gold and the feet were from iron and clay. This refers to the fact that the world will gradually deteriorate and weaken, and that corruption will be spread all over the ages.

3. Here he is talking about every kingdom as a whole, and not specifically about kings. The kingdom of Cyrus had noble traits, full of wisdom and moderation, but the kingdom of Persia was corrupted and resisted the truth.

4. This dream was shown to a pagan king. When the captive Jews who long to go back to their country realize that, they do not get depressed when the kingdom of Cyrus dominates the kingdom of Babylon, then the Greeks, then the Romans. In all that, Israel did not appear as it should in the days of King David or King Solomon, for God wanted to present the kingdom of the Son of David, the stone that struck the image and became a great mountain. Its spiritual kingdom is extended to the whole world! God wanted to direct their attention from waiting for a temporal kingdom to an eternal spiritual kingdom.

5. He ignored the kingdom of the Assyrians, for the dream was not meant to record history, but to lead everyone to the Lord Jesus, the Savior of the world. That is why he did not mention the previous kingdoms, but started with the kingdom of Babylon.

6. In this vision, Nebuchadnezzar was described as "the head made of gold," for he made Babylon a great empire, full of glory, dominion and majesty. Therefore, the divine inspiration did not refer to him as the founder of this kingdom, but rather as an

entity; Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are one. He was its symbol and representative, as he said: "*Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?!*" (Dan 4: 30). The divine inspiration described him as: "*It is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth*" (Dan 4: 22). Nebuchadnezzar was a great king and leader, he was a genius and an architect; his dominion was unlimited[1]. The divine inspiration made gold as a symbol the king and his kingdom, which was a symbol of greatness as well as wealth. Herodot, who visited Babylon 90 years after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (450 BC), saw plenty of gold in its temples, altars, vessels and equipment, besides many other products made of pure gold[2].

7. Silver was a symbol of the kingdoms of Medes and Persians, which in the Bible was a symbol of riches and continuous demand of money, for "*He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase*" (Eccl 5: 10). Judas sold Lord Jesus for silver. (Lk 22: 5). The word "silver" is the synonym of the word money. This empire loved money, and because of the tax system, the kings of Medes and Persians collected lots of silver. Daniel had prophesied in his third vision (11: 2) that one of the richest Persian kings, who was Ahasuerus, would collect all the silver of his father Darius and of the kings of Persians[3].

"You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all - you are this head of gold" **(37-38).**

"The word "***king of kings***" is a title used with most of the rulers of the East, it was a general title between the Persians, the Ethiopians and the Babylonians[4]. In the book of Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar was also called "*king of kings*" (Ezek 26: 7). His authority was extended all over the civilized world, especially between the historical countries like Egypt, Palestine, Asia Minor. Thus, Babylon became a worldly kingdom, and the first model as a representative of all the worldly powers.

Here, Daniel did not praise the king, but called him the golden head of the image, which will be completely destroyed later, and that another kingdom will follow. When he says, "You are the head," he does not mean the king personally but he means the kingdom of Babylon, of which Nebuchadnezzar was the most famous king. He was known for his brutality and violence, as king Belshazzar was known by his disrespect to God.

"But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth" **(39).**

The kingdom of Persia was smaller than the kingdom of Babylon, not due to its dimensions, nor due to its weak power, dominion or riches, but rather it is smaller because of its increasing corruption and cruelty. Even Cyrus, the wise and stable, was brutal when he tried to dominate the whole world.

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[1] *The Pulpit Commentary, Daniel, p.70.*
[2] *W. A. Criswell, vol. 2, p. 62.*
[3] *W. A. Criswell, vol. 2, p. 63.*
[4] *G. H. Lange: The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel, p.76.*

Then he called the kingdom of the Macedonians, which dominated the world "bronze," not because it was mightier than the kingdom of Persia, but because it was more evil, so in comparison it is a bronze when compared to silver.

***"And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay"* (40-43).**

This applies to the Roman Kingdom (58 BC - 476 A.D.), for the Macedonian Kingdom was divided into four sections after the death of Alexander, and the Romans made them all submit. The Roman Caesuras were called iron, referring to their brutality, which surpassed the brutality of the kings of the previous kingdoms, and their empire, was much stronger than all the previous empires. Mixing iron with clay referred to corruption, and that there was no true unity.

The Roman Empire did not occupy the holy lands until the year 63 BC. Therefore, the scholars, who reject the divine inspiration and the prophecies, said that the book of Daniel was written during the Maccabean period between the years 167 - 165 BC. And that the writer did not prophecy, but recorded historical facts pertaining to the four kingdoms: the Chaldeans, the Medes, the Persians and the Greeks. Since they accepted the fourth kingdom being the Roman Empire, then the writer would have prophesied about it 100 years before its establishment. All references had ascertained that the writer was Daniel in the sixth century B. C., not just before the Roman Empire was established but even before the Greek Empire.

Father Abd-El-Messih Abu-El-Khair said:

I. The Roman armies were known as iron armies, and Daniel the prophet used the word "iron" 14 times in describing this empire. Therefore, the Church Fathers believe that the empire referred to be the Roman Empire. This was the opinion of the early fathers who wrote about the book of Daniel, like **St. Ireneaus** in the second century, **St. Hippolytus** in the third century, **St. Jerome** in the fourth century, and **St. John Chrysostom** in the fourth century… Joseph Mede, one of the interpreters, wrote that the Jewish church, before the coming of the Lord Jesus, believed that the fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire, and this belief was delivered to the disciples of the apostles and all the Christian Church for 300 years[1].

II. What proves the authenticity of this explanation, the prophecy of the book of Daniel and the greatness of the Holy Bible, that it is the word of God, is that the kingdom of the Messiah started in this empire, for the prophecy in the vision said: ***"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people." (44).*** Indeed, in that empire, the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, because of Caesar, for it is written in the book of Luke, "*And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered*" (Lk 2:1). The beginning of

[1] *Chr. Wordworth: Holy Bible with notes and introduction, p. 8.*

the ministry of John the Baptist was recorded with dates of the emperors. It is written: "*Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness*" (Lk 3:1-2). The Lord Jesus had paid the taxes for himself and for the disciples (Matt 17:24-27), and He used its currency (Matt22: 17-21) and He was crucified according to its laws (Jh19: 21).

III. The Roman Empire stayed longer in power than any other empire. The Babylonian Empire lasted 70 years, the Persian-Medes Empire lasted 200 years, the Greek Empire lasted 130 years, but the Roman Empire lasted 500 years, united, and it remained with its two divisions, the Eastern and the Western, until the year 145 A.D., when the Turks dominated Constantinople. The Western part remained with the rest of the European countries until today. The civilization of these countries and some of their population were transferred to the North and the South of America as well as Australia.

IV. In the second century, **St. Ireneaus**, in explaining the prophecy, said: [The kingdom is divided, and in his referral to the ten fingers, he meant the ten kings who ruled the ten parts of the kingdom, some will be strong and effective, while others will be very lazy and useless[1].] **St. Jerome** said that the prophecy was partly fulfilled in his era, at the destruction of the empire by the inner enmity and the civil wars. It was later fulfilled when the empire was divided to Eastern and Western parts. Lately, it has been divided into many small states. **St. Hippolytus** thought that the ten fingers, made from iron and clay, meant the different democracies, which were divided between the ten fingers of the image in which the iron and the clay were mixed together.

V. Some think that the mingling of iron and clay refers to the mixing of two civilizations, like the barbarian groups penetrating the modern Empire. Thus the invasion of the Germanian tribes from one side and the Turks from the other side is the nearest interpretation to the real meaning of the symbol in the prophecy.

8. THE STRANGE STONE

***"You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth"* (34-35).**

The most important thing in the dream was that strange stone which was able to crush the kingdoms to establish a spiritual kingdom which fills the earth, a kingdom which lasts forever. Here he talks about a New Kingdom, which shall be established from the stone without hands, for the Lord Jesus was incarnated from a virgin.

Without hands refer to the kingdom being heavenly without beginning.

Calling the Lord Jesus the Stone or Rock, for He is the Cornerstone who united the Jews with the Gentiles in one faith, that is, He united them as binding two walls with the cornerstone, and He is the Rock on which His Church is built.

[1] *Adv. Haer. 5:26:1.*

"The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes" (Ps 118: 22-23). Isaiah said, "He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel." (Is 8: 14). "Behold I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." (Is 28: 16). "For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: Upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold I will engrave its inscription" (Zech. 3:9; cf. Acts 4: 11, 1 Pet 2: 7,8).

❖ The stone which came from heaven, struck the image and demolished all the kingdoms and gave the kingdom to God's saints[1].]

❖ [The stone, which struck the image and filled the earth, is the Christ who came from heaven for the judgment of the world[2].

St. Hippolytus

❖ Daniel, saying that a stone without hands will judge the world, was referring to the Lord's coming. That He, the Lord Jesus Christ, came not according to a human plan but according to a divine plan. "*Therefore, thus says the Lord God: "Behold I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily*" (Is. 28:16). The Lord's coming in the human nature was according to God's will and not man's will[3].

St. Ireneaus

❖ This mountain refers to the Jewish kingdom, and from this mountain was cut a stone without hands, referring to Christ who was born not of any human act[4].

Fr. Caesarus of Arles

❖ This was the temple of the flesh, which was cut from the mountain of human nature, without any human act[5].

Origen

❖ There was a big stone put on the well (Gen. 29), where many shepherds used to remove it to offer drink for themselves and for their cattle. But only Jacob removed the stone and offered drink to the cattle of his bride. What was this stone except the Lord Himself? Daniel also said, "*stone cut without hands*," who is Christ born not of human act. It is strange to cut a stone from a rock without any axe or any cutting tools; likewise it was strange that the Lord Jesus was born from a virgin[6].

St. Gregory of Nyssa

9. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM

"This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all-you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom

[1] *AN Frs. Vol. s, P. 178.*
[2] *Ibid. 179.*
[3] *Adv. Haer. 3 : 21 : 7.*
[4] *Sermon 169:6.*
[5] *In Exod. hom. 6:12.*
[6] *On the Baptism of Christ.*

inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold - the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure" **(36-45).**

10. THE GLORIFIED DANIEL

"Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him" **(46).**

It was not easy for the king to fall down and prostrate before Daniel. The king who considered himself like a god whom everyone worshiped, was hard for him to worship Daniel, especially because Daniel did not tell him any joyful news, but rather that his kingdom will be abolished, and in great weakness and humility he submitted to God's plan. The king bowed down to glorify the God of Daniel, but for a moment, like what the Pharaoh did. (Ex.9: 27, 10: 16). Nebuchadnezzar himself felt God's mighty hand and witnessed to that by saying, "*How great are His signs, and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation*" (Dan.4: 3). However, he still loved vainglory, and the luxurious life choked the word of God, which had sprouted inside him.

"The king answered Daniel, and said, 'Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a Revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret'" **(47).**

He glorified God, but for a moment, for he was not serious in the salvation of his soul. God had allowed that to encourage the captive Jews that they may realize that God can be glorified in them, if they return to God with all their hearts.

"Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise men of Babylon" **(48).**

Daniel accepted the king's gift for the service of his people; that is why he appointed the three young men for the works of the Babylonian kingdom, knowing that they do not desire anything from this world and its riches, but he did that for his captive brothers.

11. DANIEL'S COMPANIONS

"Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel sat the gate of the king" **(49).**

Daniel sat at the gate of king's palace as a chief, so that he may observe everyone who moves in or out the palace. Probably he had the responsibility of the judiciary affairs in the palace, where the custom was to put the courts at the door of the palace.

Daniel and his companions did not desire any temporary matters, but rather desired the kingdom of God and its righteousness, thus God gave them more than what they expected; the temporary and the heavenly gifts.

- when they asked for the heavenly matters from God, they accepted also the temporal matters from the king[1].

St. Hippolytus of Rome

[1] *Scholia on Daniel 2 :49.*

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (2)

MAY YOU MAKE ME ENTER INTO MY HOUSE!

❖ The king and his advisers were worried about the forgotten dream.
But Daniel did not shake because he was unjustly exposed to death!
Grant me to enter with Daniel to my house,
to enter into my inner Jerusalem,
to meet You, O king of heavens with Your angels and saints.

❖ May You carry me to Your eternal chambers,
reveal to me Your surpassing mysteries,
grant me Your knowledge,
and transform my life into a joyful praise!
Instead of worrying, all my inner being is shaken of joy.

❖ I see that all the kingdoms of the world are like a metal image,
which is crushed.
You are the Cornerstone who crushes evil and brings all the holy ones to You!
You declare Your abundant love to all the earth!
May You crush any strange image in me
and create Your joyful kingdom inside me!

CHAPTER 3

THE THREE YOUTHS IN THE FIERY FURNACE

God talked to Nebuchadnezzar through the language of dreams in which he believes, for his spirit was troubled (Dan 2: 3). Daniel interpreted the dream for him, warning him from pride, for he became like a golden head (Dan 2: 8) to a metal image, which will be destroyed. The king bowed before Daniel and witnessed that God is the God of gods and the King of kings (Dan 2: 46,47). Soon enough, the king forgot all that and erected an image of his person, not only with a golden head, but it was all made of gold, (statue from wood or metal all gold plated). He ordered that everyone in his kingdom should bow down to his statue or else will be thrown into a fiery furnace. (Dan 3: 6).

Nebuchadnezzar's heart was like a thorny ground, for he had heard the interpretation of the dream by Daniel and had glorified God, and had appointed Daniel above all the wise men of Babylon, as well as appointing his three friends over all the affairs of Babylon. But soon, the thorns had choked the word.

1. Building a golden image **1-7**
2. Complaint against the three youths. **8-12**
3. Debate with Nebuchadnezzar **13-18**
4. The three youths in the fiery furnace **19-23**
5. Deliverance of the three youths **24-30**
6. The praise of the three youths

1. BUILDING A GOLDEN IMAGE

***"Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon"* (1).**

Some think that the act of Nebuchadnezzar is of someone who wanted to outdo the effects of the dream from his people and his kingdom, for he felt that many had glorified the God of Israel. Therefore, he built this image to occupy the minds of the people. Was this image for Nebuchadnezzar himself, or for the god of his kingdom, or for a new god? Daniel did not mention that, but the majority thinks that he wanted to make himself a god. So if he appeared as someone humble before Daniel, it was only for a moment, shortly after he recovered his pride and vainglory.

Probably after he had his dream, the king was afraid that the Jews would stir the Gentiles not to worship the gods of the king. Therefore, he built this golden image, as a test for all the people which he had taken as captives. He set it up in the plain of Dura, or in the open city.

Because the image was so huge, some thought that this was not a historical story. But to refute this, we say that probably the whole image was not made from pure gold, but maybe it was only gold plated, and the dimension of the image included the big base on which the image was built.

***"And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then a herald cried aloud: 'To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.' So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up"* **(2-7).**

The dimensions of the image were an omen of a decline. Number seven refers to perfection, while number eight refers to what is beyond the temporal perfection, for the Lord Jesus rose on the first day of the new week (that is the eighth day). Number six refers to the decline, for the name of the antichrist is 666 (Rev 13: 13-18), which means continuous decline. Here, the image measures 60 feet in height and 6 feet in width (1).

Nebuchadnezzar used every possible way to force people to worship the image. He used the army to frighten the public, and used all kinds of music to stir the emotions. Thus, in every generation, Satan uses every possible means to attract us to worship him, or to drive some people away from God toward sin, or to convince some that the holy life is rebellion against the society.

All the nations worshiped the image, whether it is god or the king or another god, to obey the king's command, who threatened to torture them in a fiery furnace.

2. COMPLAINT AGAINST THE THREE YOUTHS

The wicked people talked with the king, telling him that the three youths have disobeyed the king and that they have declared that to obey God is better than to obey men. (Acts 5: 29).

"Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, 'O king live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up" **(8-12).**

It is noted here that they were using some Greek musical instruments, for the Greek culture has influenced this region, through the Greek merchants and some Greek colonies before the establishment of the Greek Empire.

It is obvious that the movements of the three youths were under strict supervision, especially after the issuing of the order to worship the image. Probably some of the king's advisers have notified the king that those strangers did not participate with the rest of the

people in the Babylonian religious rites. Some have envied those, whom the king elevated from the slavery to occupy high positions in the country, and accused them of being rebellious and not worshiping the gods.

The Chaldeans, whom Daniel and the three youths have rescued from death (Dan. 2:2) complained to the king about those who saved them, and asked that the three youths be cast in the fiery furnace. The Chaldeans gave back hatred instead of love, envy instead of mercy. This is the nature of the sinful who likes to annoy the righteous and persecute them.

St. Clement of Rome said: [You cannot find in the church books saints expelling righteous, but we find evil people persecuting righteous, ungodly people arresting good people. The righteous people endured all that with glory. What shall I say? Did men who fear God throw Daniel into the lion's den? Were Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael thrown in the fiery furnace by righteous peoples whom worshiped God? God forbid! [1]]

3. DEBATE WITH NEBUCHADNEZZAR

***"Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up"* (13-18).**

Nothing excites those who are in authority except the feeling that someone does not obey them, even if their orders are unjust. He gave them a last chance to rescue their lives, if they worship the image only once. What troubled him was not worshiping the image but rather defying his authority.

Tertullian spoke of obedience to kings and rulers (Rom 13: 1; 1 Pet 2: 13) except for matters pertaining to faith -: [The three youths were obedient to Nebuchadnezzar except when he told them to worship the image; they completely refused[2].]

The three youths could have some excuses to justify worshiping the image:

1. They were young in age and captives.

2. They were under the authority of a brutal king.

3. The king had absolute authority over them, being a captive of war. They were required to worship only once, without forbidding them from worshiping God.

4. They were offered all kinds of music to stir them.

5. The king himself, who gave them to live in the luxury of the palace, threatened them.

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[1] *l Cor. 45:4-7.*
[2] *On Idolatry, 15.*

6. They were in a strange country, and they could have easily done what the people are doing, as the proverb says, "When in Rome, do as Romans do."

7. Their predecessors worshipped the idols even in the temple in Jerusalem and in all Judah as was mentioned in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, without any outside pressure, while these strangers insisted that they do not worship the idols even in a strange country.

8. By refusing to worship the idols, they lose every chance to do something to help their people; however, they were confident that God could rescue them.

The furnace was made from red bricks, with an opening on the top as a side door, through which the king had seen the three youths and the Son of God.

King Nebuchadnezzar defied their King. However, they defied death because of their faith in God. They believed that God could save them even if He does not save them from the temporal fire. They were not afraid of the king's threatening, for they believed that:

A. God can save them, and that He is the Guardian of their lives, and that He does not allow them to die;

B. They believed that if God allows them to die, they would accept that courageously, offering their lives as a sacrifice to testify their love to God.

The three youths are considered martyrs because they witnessed to the divine truth, offering their lives as a price for their testimony, whether they are killed or whether God delivers them. **St. Augustine** said that martyrdom is not achieved through only death, but according to the condition of the believer. Martyrdom is based on two principles: first, believing in God who guards and guides our lives to the direction He wants us to follow, and second watching a door opened in heaven where we can see the glory prepared for us, recognizing that we are passing through a transient period.

❖ Look at their faith! They say we believe that God can save us, and if our sins hinder us, we believe that He can deliver us from the eternal death. We do not believe in this life only but in the life to come. We do not believe just to escape from the flames, but so that we may not escape crossing this fire to fall in another serious fire. Therefore, do what you want, prepare your furnace, for it is for our purification[1].]

St. Jerome

Maybe some may ask why no one complained that Daniel did not worship the image? The answer is that perhaps Daniel was in a mission outside the region. And second, those who complained against Daniel were afraid that the king might accuse them, for they knew how the king appreciated and highly regarded Daniel, or maybe, they were planning to accuse Daniel after the three youths. Third, probably the king felt that everyone should bow down to Daniel because he is greater than the image or equal to it.

4. THE THREE YOUTHS IN THE FIERY FURNACE

"***Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore, because the king's command was***

[1] *On Ps. hom. 55.*

***urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. And these three men, Shadrack, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace*" (19-23).**

They were thrown in the furnace from the upper opening. By looking into the eternal fire, they did not fear the temporal fire, or death. (Lk. 12:4,5).

What did the fire of persecution do to them?

A. The Word of God appeared, the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. He who was inside them protected them and embraced them.

B. The flames unbound the ties, however it could not touch their hair, nor their clothes.

C. The king confessed to their God that He is the Savior and honored them in the region of Babylon.

St. John Cassian wrote that the king of Babylon refers to the devil that stirs inside us the fire of the lust.

❖ We subdue the lusts of the flesh by depriving the flesh of the food that stirs lust and pride. Thus, by repentance and the tears of our hearts, we can put off the flame of the fire of lust, which the Babylonian king has inflamed. But through the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we can subdue the carnal lusts[1].

St. John Cassian

5. DELIVERANCE OF THE THREE YOUTHS

***"Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." "Look!" He answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here." Then, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered servants who trusted in , and they have frustrated king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon" (24-30).**

There was a side door for the furnace. The king stood by that side door to see them thrown inside the furnace. What did he see?

First, the fire had purified them in the eyes of God and in the eyes of the king, so the One like the Son of God appeared to glorify them.

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[1] *Institutes, Book 5:14.*

Second: The fire had loosened the iron chains, but did not affect their clothes.

Third: While some of the soldiers died because of the heat, the three youths were walking in the fiery furnace.

Fourth: The fire changed into dew, and probably the king wanted to enjoy what they were enjoying but he couldn't, so he called them to come out to him.

The three youths came out of the furnace, but they were walking inside it until the king ordered that they should come out. They were obedient to the king, in the Lord.

The Chaldeans knew the story about throwing the three youths in the fiery furnace. Therefore, they became a living witness in the province of Babylon to God the Savior of His righteous people. But what did the king do about his eternity?

- Hananiah, Mishael, and Abed-Nego deserved to be protected from the flames by the dew, and to have the mouths of the lions shut, through the prayers of Daniel[1].
- Hananiah and his friends went down to a spiritual pond granted to all the saints, and which Isaac had uttered these words when he told Jacob, "*May God give you of the dew of heaven*.." (Gen 27: 28). This was much better than the material dew that put off the flames of Nebuchadnezzar[2].
- Nebuchadnezzar uttered the same words which we now utter, for we are crossing to the life to come (Heb 11: 13), yet we experience the heavenly dew which puts off all the flames of lust, and we follow the example of the three youths[3].

Origen

- In the Old Testament, prayers were used to deliver from fire (Dan. 3), from animals (Dan. 6), and from famine (1 Kings 18, James 5:17-18). Although this happened before the Lord Jesus had honored prayers, how about now? [4]

Tertullian

- The three youths became an example for all the believers. For they did not fear the words of the king, nor when they saw the flames of the fire, but they considered the entire world as a trash can, keeping only the fear of God before their eyes. Daniel stood away in silence. Nevertheless, he smiled and encouraged them to be steadfast in their faith. Moreover, he was delighted with their testimony and understanding, and for them receiving the crowns of victory over the devil[5].
- The king called the three youths by their names, but he couldn't find a name for the fourth One, for He was not yet incarnated to be the Christ born from the Virgin[6].
- They were honored not only by God, but by the king too. They taught the Gentiles to worship God[7].

St. Hippolytus of Rome

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[1] *On Prayer, 16:3.*
[2] *On Prayer, 16:3.*
[3] *Exhortation to Martyrdom 33.*
[4] *On Prayer, 29*
[5] *Scholia on Daniel, 3:16.*
[6] *Scholia on Daniel, 3:39*
[7] *Scholia on Daniel, 3:79.*

❖ when they were locked inside the furnace, the flames escaped and the Lord was with them, assuring that no power can stand against His confessors and witnesses. No harm can touch those who depend on God, but they are always in a haven from all dangers[1].

❖ [They added that God is the Almighty who can do everything. They did not say that just for a temporal request, but to enjoy the glory of the eternal freedom and guarantee[2].

❖ [They say, "**If that is the case**..." telling the king that they are willing to die for the sake of God whom they worship. This is the courageous power of faith. Believing that God can rise from the dead does not mean fear from death, or escape from it, but through it, faith is strengthened the more[3].

❖ [The three youths were the same age, steadfast in their faith, persisting in the virtue, and stronger than the flames and the punishments imposed on them. They declared that they obey only God, and know and worship Him only[4].

St. Cyprian

❖ The three youths have manifested themselves above all lusts of the flesh and despised wrath of the king. They were very courageous and did not fear the fire, but proved to all that the golden image is a worthless god[5].

❖ How did the three youths have victory over the power of fire? By their persistence[6]

St. Basil the Great

❖ The three youths were famous in Babylon because of the fire[7].

St. Augustine

Before those who accused the three youths find anything to justify themselves, the king had issued a decree to abolish anyone who stand against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. However, he did not forsake the pagan worship, and did not ask to be with the God of the three youths and to enjoy His presence.

6. THE PRAISE OF THE THREE YOUTHS

The three youths started praising God and glorifying Him in the fiery furnace. The church sings this praise daily. We'll talk about it later when we talk about the completion of the book of Daniel in the Septuagint.

❖ God, who made the fiery furnace in Babylon cold, is in our midst[8].

St. Basil the Great]

❖ said: [The three youths cried to the Lord inside the furnace; and when they praised God, the fire became cold. The flames could not touch them nor harm them, and God delivered them from it[1].

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[1] *Epistle, 80:3.*
[2] *Epistle, 80:3.*
[3] *Epistle, 55:5.*
[4] *Treatise, 11:11.*
[5] *On Renunciation of the World.*
[6] *The Long Rules, Q.16.*
[7] *Sermons for Christmas 1:13.*
[8] *On Detatchment.*

❖ It is obvious that God never forsook the three youths who praised in the furnace, and the flames could not touch them[2].]

St. Augustine

[1] *Second Discourse on Ps 33 (34).*
[2] *Third Discourse on Ps 36 (37).*

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (3)

SO THAT I MAY WALK WITH YOU IN THE FURNACE

❖ Let the fire be inflamed and the enemy roars,
but as long as You are with me,
I am not afraid!
You change the fire into dew!
Instead of groaning,
You change my life into praise!
May You be transfigured in my depths,
and glorified in my weaknesses,
You who are the God of the impossible!
Grant me the spirit of prayer with praise,
so that I may deny all the flames of tribulations and the devil and all his evil deeds!
I shall not fear,
for You grant me victory over sin!

CHAPTER 4

THE DECREE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR
OR
THE HAUGHTY TREE

This chapter is unique in the Holy Bible where Daniel, the prophet, presents a royal decree revealing to the pagan king a divine talk with God in a dream. God talked with him twice in a dream (ch. 2) where He showed him the haughtiness of Babylon and its fall; and in the fiery furnace (ch. 3) where God revealed to him that He defies his oppression. Now He talks with him in a second dream to put him down, and to break his haughtiness. In the book of Job, "*For God may speak in one way, or in another, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction"* (Job 33: 14-16).

In this royal decree, the old king confesses his pride and is not ashamed to witness to God who broke his pride, by chastening him until he lowered him to the level of animals. He admits that he was under God's chastisement, and though it may appear severe, yet he deserves it. All what happened to him is a natural fruit of his evil life, for now he is reaping from what he has sown and drinking from the cup, which he had filled with his own hands.

Daniel presented the decree in its original language.

1. The decree of Nebuchadnezzar	**1-3**
2. Calling the wise men to interpret his dream	**4-8**
3. The haughty tree	**9-18**
4. Daniel interprets the dream	**19-27**
5. Fulfilling the interpretation	**28-36**
6. Nebuchadnezzar glorifies God	**37**

1. THE DECREE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

"***Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied to you*" (1).**

St. Jerome said that the message of Nebuchadnezzar was recorded in the prophets, so no one can claim that Daniel did not write the book. He meant to direct his statement to that pagan man, Porphyry, who attacked the book of Daniel[1].

Nebuchadnezzar presented a royal message from his heart, after going through a period of divine chastening because of his pride. He was not ashamed to direct this message to all nations, and people living in all the earth.

a. for it was the custom for kings to consider themselves rulers over all the earth, however the Babylonian Empire did not extend to the countries of Gaul and others. Thus, Rome, during the Roman Empire, was called the empire seat for the whole world, although the empire did not extend to the whole world, then. In his message, Nebuchadnezzar declares that:

b. He testifies to his personal relationship with God, for God had done with him many wonders. Even if God had chastised him, yet he deserves all that. He glorified God

[1] *PL 25:644 B.*

for His care and confessed his sins and stated that he deserved God's chastisement. "***I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God had worked for me. How great are His signs and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation"*** **(2-3).**

c. He admits God's surpassing power, "***How great are His signs and how mighty His wonders"*** **(3). St. Jerome** said: [The king was restored to his throne, through God's mercies, thus he praised the God of heaven and glorified Him for all His works are true and His ways are righteous. He is the Almighty who can subdue all those who walk in pride[1].]

d. He witnesses to God's everlasting kingdom, and that His dominion never ends; but the earthy kingdoms – the kingdoms of men - will definitely perish. "***His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation"*** **(3).**

The beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's decree was written in a divine language, which led some people to think that this reveals how much Daniel has influence over the king and his language[2].

God talked with the king who was a ruler over all the earth at that time. But the king was still very proud, for he witnessed to God with his lips but his heart remained haughty. His witness to the Holy God was temporary, for still he worshipped the pagan gods and was attached to his wrong beliefs.

2. CALLING THE WISE MEN TO INTERPRET THE DREAM

"I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace" (4).

Before Nebuchadnezzar talks about God's judgments because of his pride, he says that he was at rest and flourishing in his palace, for he had conquered Egypt, Syria, Phoenicia, Judah, Arabia, at the year 34 or 35 after his reign. (Ezek.29: 17). These consecutive victories made him proud, for he felt that he is never defeated and that no one could attack him, therefore peace was secured.

Some translate the word "*selueh*" or rest as abundance. When one has everything in abundance, he becomes like a horse, which no one can control once he indulges in eating. That is why God sometimes controls our stomachs so He doesn't give us all that we desire, not to deprive us of it, but to teach us to walk in righteousness in the proper way, such that we do not harm ourselves or do wrong to Him.

"***I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation***" **(5-7).**

Here, the king distinguishes this dream, that it is different from the other dreams, and that it is an unusual dream, which carries a divine message; that is why he called the wise men to interpret it.

Daniel was in the palace but the king had completely ignored him, for he called the wise men, the astrologers, and the Chaldeans. When they failed to interpret his dream, the king sought Daniel. He wanted the skills of the magicians, although he knew the

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *cf. the New Bible Commentary, Eerdmans, 1971, p.693.*

power of the divine interpretation. Often a lot we do the same thing. The prophetic word is in our hands and the divine knowledge not far from us, yet we ignore all that and we seek the temporal blessings. Let us seek the work of God, who is full of wisdom, power, love, and is dwelling inside us. Let us abide in his promises instead of seeking outside help!

The magicians could not interpret the dream, although they had previously said: "*Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation*" (ch.2: 4,7). The prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, "*You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; let now the astrologers, the stargazers, and the monthly prognosticators stand up and save you from what shall come upon you*" (Is. 47: 13).

"***But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God, and I told the dream before him, saying*" (8).**

When all the human devices failed, the king called God's man, Daniel, and told him the dream. He, as a pagan king, believes that Daniel has ***"the Spirit of the Holy God."* (8)**

The king did not call Daniel, although he knew that he is able to interpret the dream, because he knew that the dream meant chastisement for him. That is why he did not seek Daniel's interpretation except at the very end[1].

3. THE HAUGHTY TREE

"***Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation***" **(9).**

The king called him "Belteshazzar," thinking that he is honoring him because he was referring to a pagan god. However, the name hurt Daniel's feelings, for he preferred the name given to him by his parents, because it connects him with God. He also called Daniel "chief of the magicians," which even hurt his feelings more because he did not want to be associated with the magicians who had deceived the world with their witchcraft. The king knew two things pertaining to Daniel:

First, that he had "***the Spirit of the Holy God"* (9).** Whatever he utters, is not from him but from the Holy Spirit. When all the human devices failed, the king called Daniel because he has the Spirit of the Holy God.

Second, "***that no secret troubles you"* (9).** helped eliminating the king's worry.

"***These were the visions of my head while on my bed: I was looking, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew and became strong; its height reached to the heavens, and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves were lovely, its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, the birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it. I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down form heaven. He cried aloud and said thus: "Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on***

[1] *The New Bible Commentary, p. 693.*

***the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times pass over him"* (10-16).**

Nebuchadnezzar liked the trees of Lebanon and used its wood for construction therefore; God compared him to a huge tree.

Often the prophets refer to great men as trees, as was mentioned in the book of Ezekiel chapters 17: 5-7; 31: 3; Ps.1: 3 and 38: 35). The historian Herodot says that Ahasuerus saw a dream where he was crowned with an olive tree which its branches filled the whole earth, but soon the crown on his head was withered, so he realized that his reign will end.

God wants that all those who have authority to be like trees in which others find their rest and satisfaction. But on the contrary they abused their authority and changed their ministry to exploitation and pride. Thus, the trees had to be uprooted; and the tree of the cross had to be planted to announce love, peace and inner joy to everyone.

In this chapter, God warns King Nebuchadnezzar, making it clear to him in a dream that he is under severe chastisement because of his pride. In this warning, we still see the compassion of God in His dealings with man, for even the haughty pagan king, God was revealing to him the chastisement so he may return from his wickedness and repent. He gave him a whole year to examine himself, but instead of repenting, he became proud. Even when God was warning him, He compared him to a useful tree, which provides a shade for the animals of the wilderness, and food for men and animals as well as shelter for the birds.

❖ People brag, not because of their great virtues but because of their pride therefore they perish[1].

St. Jerome

The king related to Daniel the dream of the huge tree which was characterized by the following:

a. A tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great (10). In the midst of the earth, that is in the center, where the Babylonian Empire extended over all nations. **Origen** and **St. Jerome** see that Jerusalem, being the city of God where the temple was, is the center of the earth. Some people think that Babylon is the center of the earth because in it there is the royal palace of the antichrist and his kingdom. Since Nebuchadnezzar represents a planted tree in Babylon, the mother of proud adulterous, then **the true believer represents a planted tree in Jerusalem, in the house of God**.

b. "***The tree grew and became strong; its height reached to the heavens, and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth***" (11).

c. Its leaves were lovely (12) referring to the many constructions and decorations of the capital which Nebuchadnezzar had built.

d. Its fruit abundant and in it was food for all, (12) referring to the huge fortune of Nebuchadnezzar.

e. It shelters others for "***The beasts of the field found shade under it, the birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches***" (12).

This is what God offers man, to make him king ruling himself, making him grow until he is in the bosom of the Father, who is glorified in all the earth, satisfying everyone, open with love for everyone!

[1] *PL 25:646.*

When Nebuchadnezzar fell in pride, he deserved chastening. So God sent him an angel, called a watcher, a holy one coming down from heaven.

The angel was called a watcher, for he is a spirit without body, does not sleep, and does not need rest, always alert day and night. He fulfills the will of God for the edification of His people, as David the psalmist said, "*Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word*" (Ps 103: 20).

The angel was also called the holy one for he does not carry any human weaknesses, for we are weak not just because of our sins but also because of the corruption that entered our lives similar to our forefathers, Adam and Eve, and affected our bodies as well as our hearts and minds.

No matter how much man is sanctified, yet because he is still in the flesh, he is not called the holy one because he is surrounded by temptations and he has to struggle to overcome them. We have to differentiate between angels and human beings, between the struggling believers and those who have departed.

In this chastisement, we notice the following:

a. Whatever happened to the pagan king was not through a human plan, but through God's permission, for He sent His watchful angel to implement this plan. He talked to him in the language of Chaldeans who believed in heavenly beings who condemn the works of men, and have power on determining destiny.

b. There is mercy at the same time there is chastisement. God ordered that the roots remain in the earth so that the tree may grow again in humility and repentance. Do not completely uproot the tree, for chastisement is for a limited time (16). "*For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant*" (Job 14: 7-9). God had allowed Nebuchadnezzar to eat the plant with the animals of the wilderness, yet He did not deprive him of the dew of heaven.

c. The order to escape was for the animals, which were resting in the shade of the tree and for the birds in its branches. This referred to all the statesmen forsaking the king; this was the fruit of sin to feel isolated; to feel that everyone is abandoning us during the time of trouble.

d. It is very clear from the dream that the tree symbolized a certain person, for he says, "***Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of a beast***" (16). He did not say "it" referring to the tree but "he" referring to a person.

e. What does God mean by the heart? He means the understanding, the will, the feelings and the inner soul as a whole. Of course trees do not have hearts, but this dream was a symbolic dream. The order was to remove from the king his empire and his human nature, for he does not deserve to live as a man.

e. He did not appoint a king instead of him, but appointed his son until Nebuchadnezzar came back to his mind.

f. In this statement (16), God is confirming to the king that he cannot escape from the chastisement.

g. The purpose of the chastisement was to benefit others (17).

"***This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men. This***

dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation; since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you" (17-18).

The word "*pethegma*" probably means a decree or an edict, as was mentioned in the book of Esther 1: 20. What was declared was a heavenly decree, but why is the king referring the decree to the holy watchful angels, is it a divine order or an angelic one?

No doubt that the order was divine, from God Himself, but referring it to the angels was because they had a positive role.

The angels completely obey God's commands and implement His orders, pray for the salvation of people and ask God to interfere to chasten those who blaspheme against Him. The decree issued from God was in harmony with the desire of the angels and their continued supplications, as if it was issued from them.

4. DANIEL INTERPRETS THE DREAM

"***Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke and said, 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.' Belteshazzar answered and said, 'My Lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!"*** **(19).**

Daniel was astonished and very sorrowful at the disaster that will befall the king of Babylon. The king was a tyrant, he captived the Jewish people together with other nations. Daniel, being in the palace, was obliged to pray for him, for God said through Jeremiah, "*And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace*" (Jer 29: 7). However, the seventy years were not accomplished thus the believers did not have the right to ask the king to go back to Judah, instead they submitted to him and served him faithfully without any hatred. Knowing that, Daniel was sad about what will befall the king.

"***The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home - it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth"*** **(20-22).**

Here, Daniel's amazing wisdom appears, for though his love to the king and his humility before him as well as his desire to rescue him from the disaster, yet he talked with him frankly and uttered the divine truth. Daniel is giving a practical lesson in service, for the true servant is compassionate toward sinners and desires their salvation. If he rebukes sinners, he does not forget that he himself is weak and at the same time, he does not agree with sinners at the expense of the truth, and does not cover up God's wrath at sin. Daniel was compassionate with the king, but very courageously said: "*It is you, O king*." He did not hesitate, did not present any excuses, nor was in any doubt, but with great certainty he declared to him that he was the tree.

"***And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze 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 has come upon my lord the king"* (23-24).**

St. Jerome asked: "Who will bind the king with a band of iron and bronze?" And he answered, [Certainly, only the crazy and the insane are the ones tied in chains so that they would not harm themselves[1].]

Daniel was assuring that the dream and all the consequences in it applied to the king. But he still called the king "O king." He respected him and revered him.

"***They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses***" **(25).**

Kings are often tyrant, they give orders and never submit to anyone, and they may even forget that they have a human nature. Here, Daniel presents the interpretation, not to show the king his weak nature but to tell him about God's chastening. The king will be lowered to the animals' level.

"***And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules***" **(26).**

In this verse, Daniel is preparing King Nebuchadnezzar to repent. He opens before him the door of hope, for God's abundant mercies await the penitent. **God chastises people, not to torture them but to discipline and elevate them, and grant them the gift of knowledge**. For Daniel tells the king, "*After you come to know;*" Chastisement is a school where we enjoy the surpassing heavenly knowledge.

"***Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity"* (27).**

Daniel kept silent for a while and he felt perplexed. The king felt the seriousness of the dream and encouraged Daniel to talk; assuring him that he will accept the news. Daniel was afraid and his thoughts scared him for two reasons:

a. The fall of a great king to the lowest level, the level of animals, by having a heart of an animal.

b. That he is the one, who is interpreting the dream although he wished the king well.

The king encouraged Daniel to talk because he was curious and wanted to know the truth.

❖ Daniel made known the truth without insulting the king, to avoid accusing the king of false pride[2].

St. Jerome

Daniel concluded his talk by opening the door of hope before the king, through repentance and deeds of mercy. Daniel wished that Nebuchadnezzar would repent so he would not fall under such severe chastisement. Therefore, he advised him to show mercy to the poor, thus turning from violence and selfishness to love and giving, so that he may find grace in the eyes of God.

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[1] *PL 25:647C.*
[2] *Ibid.*

❖ If you open your hands to the poor, Christ as well opens the gates of Paradise before you[1].]

Fr. Caesarus of Arles

❖ God postponed the punishment for twelve months to give Nebuchadnezzar a chance to do merciful deeds, but instead, in great haughtiness, he used to walk in his palace saying, "*This is the great Babylon which I have built*." [2]

❖ We also read in the book of Jeremiah, that God is directing the Jewish nation to pray for the Babylonians, for the peace of the captives is associated with the peace of those who keep them captive[3].

St. Jerome

5. THE FULFILLMENT OF THE INTERPRETATION

"***All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses"* (28-32).**

The Hebrew word "*mehelek*" refers to the king walking on the roof of the palace, as was the custom in the countries of the East.

The king was able to see all Babylon from the roof, especially because the palace was built on a high hill.

In pride, he thought he was a god and this is the reason why he was lowered to the level of animals. King Nebuchadnezzar gave himself the credit for everything, not to God who granted him the power and wisdom. Also, he ignored those who preceded him in building the city. Listen to what King Solomon, who built the temple, said, "*Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who built it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain*" (Ps 127: 1).

"***That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation"* (33-34).**

In his pride, Nebuchadnezzar gave himself the credit for building Babylon with its great fences, its gardens, its temple for Baal and the royal palace. Herodot refers Babylon to Semiramis and Nitocris, while Berosus and Abydenus said that the Babylonians or Nebuchadnezzar had added to the old city, so Nebuchadnezzar built a huge palace and fence. It is noted from Nitocris that Nebuchadnezzar's wife had beautified the city.

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[1] *Sermon 31:3.*
[2] *PL 25:649.*
[3] *PL 25:649A.*

The critics have attacked this statement saying that, historically, Nebuchadnezzar had not built Babylon, but in the new discoveries, thousands of bricks with the engraving "Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nebopolassar," were found in Babylon. The word "*construction*" here does not mean just building but also expanding with more additions[1]. We should not forget that most kings do not like to remember the glories of their predecessors and they give themselves the credit for everything.

❖ If he had not lifted his eyes to heaven, his understanding would not have returned to him. Saying, "*my understanding returned to me*" proves that he had not lost his outside appearance but his understanding[2].

St. Jerome

Saying "***from generation to generation***" does not mean the future generations, but as **St. Jerome** said that when his understanding returned to him he realized that the mystery of the kingdom of God passes from the Law to the Gospel[3].

"***All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, what have You done?"*** **(35).**

Often, the tyrants think that God has no control over the affairs of men, and they can do whatever they like and no one can attack them. But now, the king admits that God is in control; He leads, guides, and controls everything on earth, as well as in heaven.

"***At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me"*** **(36).**

Nebuchadnezzar did not repent in spite of the fact that God had forsaken him for twelve months after the dream. On the contrary, the king became very haughty, and the dream was fulfilled. The dream was fulfilled one year later, because God wanted to give the king an opportunity to examine himself and repent and care for the needy and the captives. However, he became haughtier. The king became like an animal of the wilderness eating the hay; he lost his mind and became crazy[4].

❖ After the king of Babylon was neglected for seven years because he rebelled against the Lord, and after enduring the physical pain, he did not only restore his kingdom but fulfilled the will of God[5].]

Tertullian

God, who moved Nebuchadnezzar to chasten His people by captiving them for a while, now declares to him that everything happen with His permission. He permitted that his statesmen arrested him because of his insanity; now He directs them to restore him to the kingdom without seeing God's hidden hand.

6. NEBUCHADNEZZAR GLORIFIES GOD

"***Now, I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to abase"*** **(37).**

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[1] *The Bethany Parallel Commentary on the O.T., p. 1779.*
[2] *PL 25:650.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] منشورات النفير: تفسير الكتاب المقدس، جـ 4، ص335.
[5] *On Patience 13.*

At the end of the chastening period, his mind came back to him, so he lifted his eyes up to heaven as a penitent asking for God's mercies. He had a contrite soul and glorified God. He realized that all kingdoms are vain in the eyes of God and that no one can rule forever. Probably, when Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes to heaven to glorify God, God stopped chastening him.

Some believed that there were no historical proofs about Nebuchadnezzar being insane[1]. However, Berosus and Josephus[2], the Jewish historians, referred to the craziness time of Nebuchadnezzar.

[1] منشورات النفير: تفسير الكتاب المقدس 1988، جـ 4، ص325.

[2] *Contra Apionem 1:20.*

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (4)

TRAIN MY SOUL, FOR SHE HAD GONE ASTRAY!

❖ You have granted me abundant blessings;
I was filled and yet went astray.
Who would train me but O You who cares for my salvation?

❖ Deprive me of some of your gifts,
but do not deprive me of You,
for You are my share and my eternal inheritance!
May You grant me humility,
for it builds my inner depths.

❖ I have ignored your love and your abundant blessings,
for I had no control over myself!
How hard it is for me to remain humble while You are overflowing me with abundant gifts!

❖ Let me continuously remember my weaknesses,
so that I remain humble.
Hold my hand and let me walk with You on the road of Your love!
Grant me the spirit of Daniel the prophet and servant,
so that I may desire the salvation of sinners and be compassionate toward them, but not at the expense of the divine truth.

❖ I do not fear any king no matter how tyrant he is,
and I do not hide Your word no matter how strict it is!

❖ Your threatening had scared Nebuchadnezzar,
but I find the sweetness of Your love in the midst of Your threatening to me.
Teach me to consecrate all my life to Your obedience.
Your threats and promises are for my edification.
My sins have made me fall under the divine chastening and made me eat the pigs' food.
But now I come back to You,
so may You carry me in the fellowship of the saints,
lift me to the heavenly life and grant me a surpassing heavenly knowledge!

CHAPTER 5

BELSHAZZAR
AND
THE WRITINGS ON THE WALL

The seventy years of the captivity of which Jeremiah had prophesied (Jer 25: 11) came to an end. The kingdom of Babylon had changed to a luxurious and corruptive life. Belshazzar, with his weak personality, came in power and with him the kingdom deteriorated.

Nebuchadnezzar was a proud and sinful man, and God gave him many opportunities to examine himself. His grandson, Belshazzar did not learn from the lessons of his fathers, but defied God Himself and deliberately insulted God. Therefore, God chastised him. Nebuchadnezzar did not do what Belshazzar had committed.

St. Jerome said: [He was not balanced when he committed these things but was drunk, forgetting the punishment, which had befallen Nebuchadnezzar[1].]

Daniel the prophet did not pity King Belshazzar, as he did with his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, for he was known for his injustice and corruption. This corresponds to what Zinofonm, the pagan historian, said about him that he was an evil and very violent man.

1. The banquet of Belshazzar	1-4	
2. Writing on the wall	5-9	
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1. THE BANQUET OF BELSHAZZAR

"Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand" (1).

Some translated the word "*shezzar*" as fire, however, the word "*Bel-shar-usur*" "Bel-Sharra-Utsur" means protecting the king.

The great feasts were a characteristic of these old times, and "the thousand" meant that it was a huge feast, and it represents a number. In the eastern feasts, the custom was that the king or the head of the feast sits on a high pulpit so that all may see him. That is why Daniel said, "drank wine in the presence of the thousand."

"While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines drank from them" (2-3).

The word "*father*" can mean any of his grandfathers or ancestors. The Babylonian city was in danger of Persia, for Cyrus was surrounding the city. Belshazzar was busy arranging a banquet for thousand of great people with their wives and concubines. He thought that it was impossible for Cyrus to attack the great walls of the city so he belittled

[1] *PL 25:652.*

him and that he besieged it with his army. According to Herodot, the width of the walls of Babylon was 87 feet and its height was 350 feet. It had 250 towers, which go up high as 100 feet. That is why Belshazzar thought that Cyrus could never attack.

The amount of money and effort that was spent in preparing this banquet could not be valued. During the besiege of the city, Belshazzar defied God and instead of crying to Him and fasting, he used the holy vessels for drinks and licentiousness. Cyrus knew about the size of the banquet, and that the king was indulged in drinking wine and did not have the time to manage his city, so he thought it was a good opportunity for him to attack the city[1].

While Belshazzar was in the opening ceremony, the army of Cyrus was approaching the doors of Babylon. The pagan historian, Xenophon, relates that the two leaders of Belshazzar, Godatas and Gobryas, have betrayed him; one was eunuch and killed the son of the other while they were hunting; his arrow hit the boy by mistake so the other wanted to revenge. Cyrus managed to change the canals of the Euphrates River and suddenly attacked the city.

Belshazzar and his company used the vessels, not for mere enjoyment of the drinking, but rather for insulting God and defiling the vessels, which were sanctified for the service of His temple. Moreover, they glorified the pagans while drinking.

St. John Cassian wrote in the introduction of his book "The Institutes" that during this banquet, the believers were warned not to be occupied with holy vessels made of gold or silver which the wicked kings could steal. But rather to give heed to the spiritual vessels, which means the souls of the believers, so that no one can rob them.

- When you plan in your heart to build a true temple for God, do not build it with hard rocks but with the communion of the saints. Do not build a temporary building but an everlasting building, which does not shake. When you want to sanctify the most precious vessels - not made of metals nor gold or silver, which the king of Babylon could use for his own pleasure - you want to shape holy souls with righteousness and purity who carry Christ inside them as the King[2].

St. John Cassian

One of the reasons the critics attacked this book is because of this chapter. The two pagan historians, Berosus and Abydenus, had previously declared that Nabonidus was the last Babylonian king, and that he was holding a distinguished position, even after the Persians had besieged Babylon. But, in this chapter, it was mentioned that Belshazzar was the last Babylonian king and that he was killed.

The discoveries of the archeologists had assured that what was mentioned by the pagan historian and by Daniel was true. In the Assyrian carves, which Sir Herbert Rawlinson had discovered in the year 1854 A.D., it was mentioned that Belshazzar was the son of King Nabonidus, and that he shared the reign with him. This corresponds with what was mentioned in the book of Daniel that Belshazzar was the third king of Babylon.

Among the carvings at Ur, there was a carving for Nabonidus, which contained a prayer for himself and another one for his first-born son, Bel-Shar-Usur. This kind of prayer was never offered except to the kings who reigned. Also there were records stating

[1] *Bethany Parallel Commentary on the O.T., p. 1780.*
[2] *Institutes, Preface.*

that Belshazzar had offered sheep and oxen in the temples of Sippar, as sacrifices for the king[1].

Many floods happened in a region called Hillah, in old Babylon, as a result of which a number of huge ceramic vessels were discovered containing receipts and contracts for a special organization related to banks in Babylon. These receipts and contracts revealed that Belshazzar had a house, secretaries and guards[2].

Belshazzar perhaps was the same person mentioned in the Babylonian records, who acted as vice president to the king. According to the Babylonian records, he became king, replacing his father, in the year 553 BC, and remained in that position until the year 539 BC. Although Nabonidus was absent all the time in Timah, at the North of the peninsula, yet he did not leave the kingdom until Cyrus invaded Babylon[3].

Why Belshazzar became a king of Babylon during the life of his father? This goes back to the personality of his father, Nabonidus, who was an archaeologist and involved in abundant cultural and religious cares. He was searching for the imprints of the old kings and the stones of the public buildings, as well as for records from the past. His religious cares were very strong. His daughter was devoted to the god of the moon, and his mother was a priestess in the temple of "Sun." All these elements together made him neglect the matters of the kingdom. He spent most of the days of his reign, not in Babylon but in Timmah. He let his son, Belshazzar, rule Babylon, same as Nebuchadnezzar ruled for his father Nebopolassar. Raymond P. Dougherty, professor of the Assyriology, presented these facts in New Haven, Yale, 1929[4].

"They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone" (4).

Since they defiled the holy vessels, they praised the pagan gods, thinking that they became victorious over the true God. As mentioned in the book of Habakkuk, "*Therefore they sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their dragnet; because by them their share is sumptuous and their food plenteous*" (Hab 1: 16). Thus, they ate and drank and were filled and forgot about God, who abundantly grants us gifts.

The king deliberately brought the holy vessels to use them for drinking, and being drunk, he exaggerated in mocking God. The king, with his wives and concubines, sinned and thus the banquet became a scornful council.

❖ How stupid they were! They drank in golden vessels and praised wooden gods and stones! [5]

St. Jerome

St. Jerome wrote that the golden gods refer to those who attack the truth using mental proofs that seem to be right, and the silver gods refer to those who use the logic for the same reason. The copper and iron gods refer to those who use vain babbling, the wooden gods and the stones refer to those who use trifle matters[6].

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[1] *G. L. Archer: Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, p.286.*
[2] *Today's Dictionary of the Bible; Bethany Parallel Commentary on O.T., p. 1780.*
[3] قاموس الكتاب المقدس، ص 208.
[4] *W.A. Griswell, p.38-40*
[5] *PL 25:652.*
[6] *PL 25:652A, 653.*

2. WRITING ON THE WALL

***"In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote"* (5).**

St. Jerome commented on the words, "***In the same hour***," by saying: [The hand which appeared in the same hour was to declare that God's chastening had happened due to Belshazzar's blasphemy and not for any other reason.]

It is obvious that the feast was at night because the lamp stand was found there, and they were still feasting until midnight when Cyrus invaded Babylon.

The hand appeared to the king only and not to the other dignitaries; that is why he was confused and terrified. The dignitaries became terrified like him without seeing anything.

St Jerome wrote that the writing was on the wall of the royal palace, so that the king may realize that what was written concerned him personally[1].

***"Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his lips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other"* (6).**

Few minutes ago, the king was self-conceited and thought that he was a mighty lord, mocking the true God, defiling His sacred vessels and praising the idols. Now he stood as an accused and humiliated person, and he realized that God is the true Judge. The physical power of the king was shaken, his thoughts were confused and he lost his balance and dignity before the guests at the feast.

***"The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, 'whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom"* (7).**

The king was terrified and called the magicians, the astrologers, and the soothsayers to find an answer for his confusion, but he felt that there was no solution and that he cannot escape the Almighty's hands. He forgot that he was the king, who had a great feast for the dignitaries, so he hastily called these men to help him. He lost his temper and cried loudly, which was not fitting for a king with such great authority.

Why did he not call Daniel?

a. Probably, because Daniel was getting old, thus he had retired.

b. The great honor that Nebuchadnezzar had given Daniel had caused hatred in the hearts of the magicians toward Daniel because they felt that such a stranger was better than all of them. Therefore, after Nebuchadnezzar's death, they did all what they can to exclude Daniel from the affairs of the palace, so that he may be completely forgotten. This found favor in Daniel's heart because he did not want to be counted as one of the wise men. Meanwhile, they had marred the image of the Jewish people and their worship in the eyes of the king. This was evident in the acts of the king when he held the feast and wanted to defile the holy vessels and glorify his idols. Hence, they were able to remove all the influence that Daniel had in the palace.

c. In spite of all what had happened, the king did not examine himself. He had defiled the Lord's holies and glorified his idols; did not seek the man of God to help him, but instead he asked the magicians and astrologers to help him. God had terrified him; and instead of seeking the divine voice, he sought the voice of his idols. Finally, he

[1] *PL 25:653.*

realized that he could not escape from God's judgment, however blind he may be, for his eyes couldn't see the divine light.

By declaring that he would offer gifts to anyone who would explain the vision, he showed that he did not enjoy God's fear, but became like a dead person. In his hidden pride, he declared that he would enrich anyone who could explain the vision.

***"Now all the king's wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished"* (8-9).**

This writing was like a sealed book, as was written in the book of Isaiah 29: 11, therefore they could not open it nor read it. They became blind and couldn't read it; a veil was covering their hearts and they couldn't understand it.

God granted the king to see the hidden handwriting on the wall, but He did not grant him to know the interpretation of what was written. Likewise, the wise men became like blind, something that terrified the king. This incident, which happened before thousand of dignitaries made the news of, the vision spread very quickly. It made Cyrus feel confident that God's hand supports him. All the details of this event moved Cyrus to honor Daniel, his people and his God, which in turn facilitated the return of God's people to Jerusalem.

God condemned the evil deed of the king, thus the writing was not a dream but rather a tangible fact. The king realized that punishment awaits him; therefore, he was terrified before even knowing the interpretation of the writing. Thus, whatever the king did was not out of ignorance, but he was fully aware of it.

- Belshazzar saw the fingers writing on a wall. After the vision was over, it still remained in his mind; he could visualize it but could not understand it. When the king failed to find someone to give him the interpretation, Daniel came right away, and with the spirit of prophecy, he revealed to the king the prophetic meaning of the vision[1]]

St. Augustine

3. BRINGING DANIEL BEFORE THE KING

***"The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, 'O king live-forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father, your father the king, made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers"* (10-11).**

It was obvious that the queen had lived the events of Nebuchadnezzar, the grand father of Belshazzar. Therefore, most probably the queen was the wife of Nebuchadnezzar, or the grandmother of Belshazzar and not his wife. In Babylon, the queen had a high status in the royal palace. The grandmother, in great wisdom, did not participate in the banquet because it was against the eastern traditions[2].

She reminded the king of Daniel, who most probably had retired. Belshazzar ignored all about Daniel, while others looked at Daniel as an angel from heaven. The king

[1] *The Literal Meaning of Genesis, Book 12, ch. 11.*

[2] منشورات النفير: تفسير الكتاب المقدس، ص4، ص337.

was preoccupied with his desires, which made him ignore God's man and resist God Himself.

The queen had rebuked him in a gentle way, as if telling him, "Why do you abide in the darkness while God had given you a man who had the Spirit of God?"

***"Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation"* (12).**

The old queen was able to discern between Daniel and the magicians. The magicians used to brag about their interpretation of dreams, but they could not interpret the kings' dreams; but Daniel was characterized by three divine gifts: He had an excellent spirit, he had knowledge and understanding, and he could interpret dreams.

She also revealed Nebuchadnezzar's appreciation to him, for he gave him a name "Belteshazzar." similar to King Belshazzar's name. It is therefore obvious that Nebuchadnezzar did not despise Daniel because he was a captive.

***"Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, 'Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. Now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. And I have heard of you that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom"* (13-16).**

In spite of all what had happened to the king and what he had heard from his grandmother, yet he did not humble himself, regretting what he had done, but he talked with great haughtiness to Daniel and treated him as a captive man. He used this method to oblige him to obey.

The king admitted that he had sought the magicians and they were unable to help him, and he hopes that Daniel can help him.

The king promised Daniel a golden chain and royal clothes without knowing that he himself will lose all his possessions, even his life, after a short while. He was terrified of the divine justice. Probably, he felt that he will lose everything but he hid all his fear away and promised others things he does not know if he himself would be able to enjoy ever again.

4. DANIEL'S EXPLANATION

***"Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, 'Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation"* (17).**

Daniel made it clear that he is not interested in the temporal gifts before interpreting the writing lest the king thinks that the rejection was not from the depth of the heart, but because Daniel knew that his kingdom will end. As **St. Jerome** said that Daniel followed the commandment, rejecting any reward, for it is written 'Freely you

have received, freely you give[1].' On the one hand, his heart was not attached to any richness, honor or authority. On the other hand, he realized that Belshazzar could not offer any gift because soon he will perish.

The method of interpretation in this case was different from the one used with Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel did not care about the reward for the following reasons:

The sin of the king was not due to ignorance, for he was aware of what had happened with his grandfather.

Belshazzar attacked the Almighty God.

Belshazzar glorified and praised the pagans to insult the living God.

The writing was "***Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin***," which means that God had ended your kingdom. You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting. Your kingdom has been divided and given to two empires, the Persians and the Medes.

St. Jerome said: [Elijah's prophecy about the destruction of the Babylonian kingdom was fulfilled. He said, 'My heart wavered, fearfulness frightened me; the night for which I longed He turned into fear for me. Prepare the table, set a watchman in the tower, eat and drink, arise you princes, anoint the shield!" (Is 21: 4-5) [2]]

"O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne and they took his glory from him" (18-20).

Daniel made it clear that what the king's grandfather had enjoyed was a gift from God, for every authority is from God (Rom 8: 1). God wanted to reveal His power through the kingdoms, but the king abused this gift. Instead of glorifying God and serving humanity, he became haughty and proud.

Nebuchadnezzar had authority; he could kill whomever he wanted and forgive whomever he wanted; He could exalt whomever he wanted and humiliate whomever He wanted. However, he did not realize that people's lives are in God's hand, moreover, the king's life, his honor and authority are in God's hand too.

- If the king can do whatever he wanted, how can this Bible verse be applied: "*The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes*" (Prov 21: 1). We can say that he means that every saint is a king because sin does not rule over his mortal body, and his heart remains in the hand of God (Rom 6). Whoever is in the hands of God, no one can ever snatch him[3].

St. Jerome

***"Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses"* (21).**

[1] *PL 25:653B.*
[2] *PL 25:657.*
[3] *PL 25:653-5.*

What happened with Nebuchadnezzar was very serious, and could be a lesson for the generations to come. However, soon his grandson, Belshazzar, forgot the lesson and did not learn from the experience of his grandfather. The haughtiness of Nebuchadnezzar isolated him and made him live in the kingdom of the animals, as if he had no mind. This was exactly what his grandson did with his own free will when he prepared the banquet and defiled the holy vessels.

***"But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this"* (22).**

Belshazzar was called the son of King Nebuchadnezzar who was chastened by God because of his pride, as if God is telling him, "I gave you an example from your father's house, you have no excuse!"

St. Jerome said that this talk applies to the Antichrist. As Belshazzar did not benefit from the chastening of his father Nebuchadnezzar who fell in pride, likewise the Antichrist does not benefit from what had happened to his father Satan because of his pride. As the kingdom was transferred from Belshazzar after his death, likewise the antichrist dies and the saints reign instead of him[1].

***"And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written. And this is the inscription that was written: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. This is the interpretation of each word, Mene: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; Tekel: you have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; Peres: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.' Then Belshazzar gave the command and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom"* (23-29).**

The king presented his gifts to Daniel but this did not last for long. Probably Daniel accepted them lest the king thinks that Daniel was rebelling against him or that he was haughty. Daniel was clothed with a purple robe and was given a chain of gold around his neck, symbol of the royal authority. Cyrus heard the news about Daniel and asked for the reason of honoring him, then he learnt about the vision.

St. Jerome commented that when the king presented gifts to Daniel, he thought that this gloomy prophecy will not be fulfilled in the near future, and that by honoring God's man, he will find mercy and grace in the eyes of God.

5. THE RESULTS

***"That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old"* (30-31).**

While they were indulged in drinking, Cyrus entered Babylon in a way the guards did not expect. River Euphrates overflowed under the great walls of Babylon. The Persians dug a huge tunnel outside Babylon, and the Babylonians did not know about it. They connected the tunnel with the river so the water flowed in the tunnel, and the army

[1] *PL 25:655.*

crossed the city through the dry river under the walls. The soldiers attacked the city and Belshazzar was killed that very same night or the following night. The kingdom was transferred from the hands of the Babylonians to the Persians, thus we move from the golden head of the statue to the silver chest and the shoulders, as mentioned in the second chapter of the book.

The pagan historians talked about Cyrus invading Babylon.

Darius the Mede

Darius, in Persian language, means "owning good" This was a title for the Persian kings, like for instance "Pharaoh" for Egypt and "Caesar" for Rome.

Some historians think that Darius the Mede is no one else but Cyaxares II, the son of Astyages[1] and the uncle of Cyrus who gave him the throne of Babylon, as his companion in the reign. Fr. Abdel-Messih Basit Abo-El-Kher says, it came in the book that Darius is son of Ahasuerus of the seed of the Medes, who was king over the realm of the Chaldeans (9: 1). "King" here means 'was made ruler' over Babylon, meaning he was a ruler as partner to, or representative of king Cyrus. It came also in the book that the kingdom was not given to the Medes alone but "to the Medes and Persians"(5: 28). The king ruled according to one law which alters not, "the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not" (6: 8,15), and which Darius could not change or break. In other words Daniel the prophet speaks of one united Empire that is the Empire of the Medes and Persians, and does not speak of two successive Empires. Besides he was not able to reform or change or oppose the law of the Medes and Persians, the law of the united kingdom[2]. Daniel did not speak of the war that rose between the Babylonians and the Medes but Isaiah did (chap50,51). We do not need to refer to the alliance between Medes and Persians especially in their occupying Babylon under the rule of Darius and Cyrus where both occupied the city.

St. Jerome says, [After the murder of Belshazzar by the hands of Darius, king of the Medes uncle of Cyrus the Babylonian, the Empire of the Chaldeans was destroyed by the hands of Cyrus the Persian. Isaiah spoke in chapter 21 of the two kingdoms, Medes and the Persians as a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses and a chariot of camels (Is 21: 7) [3].]

Some assume he is Gubaru or Gubarn or Gobry as the general ruler of Cyrus who occupied Babylon and had an effective role. It came in the Asphinian cuneiform paintings, which were discovered and spread in the twentieth century that Cyrus assigned Gubran the army commander as a ruler of Babylon once it was opened. In his turn Gubran assigned rulers in Babylon. This means that Cyrus gave him the right to rule the city and put rulers there, while he managed to conquer other cities. His name was written on the cuneiform plate as a ruler of Babylon and beyond the two rivers, meaning Babylon, Syria, Phoenicia, Palestine along fourteen years, and mentioning his name caused criminals to terrify.

Others assume that Cyrus himself was called Darius[4].

Herodot did not refer to Darius as a king because of his weak and corrupt personality, particularly that he passed over the thrown to his nephew Cyrus[1].

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[1] *St. Jerome: Comm. on Daniel, PL 25:651D.*

[2] القس عبد المسيح بسيط أو الخير، ص64،63.

[3] *PL 25:651D.*

[4] دار منهل الحياة: موسوعة الكتاب المقدس، ص147.

This happened when Darius was in the age of sixty-two, this matches with what came in Zinofon[2] that he was Cyaxares 2.

Why did God allow Daniel to wear the scarlet?

The life of Daniel presents to us a living picture of God's dealings with us. From time to time God is glorified in the life of Daniel and uses him for the service of His captivated people. However the more God was glorified in him the more the evil one planed to destroy him, thus the plane was altered for the edification of the kingdom of God. Now Daniel who seems to be outside the stage is attracted to the palace through Belshazzar's vision and the matter ends by his wearing scarlet and the chain of gold around his neck and becomes the third man in the kingdom.

This lasted only for a few hours where Darius captured Babylon and killed king Belshazzar.

Daniel was found in this scarled cloth, and when it was asked what about him it became known that he prophesied about the fall of the Babylonian kingdom, the rise of the Persian kingdom and the victory of Cyrus etc. He honored and approached him as the man of God; he also sympathized with his people. As if God permitted what happened in this chapter in the critical moments of the fall of Babylon and the Persians' victory so that Cyrus gives an ear to Daniel and his people. Besides that Cyrus may hear to Jeremiah's prophesies about their return after 70 years of captivity, and gives his orders to this.(Ez1: 1- 4)

[1] *Cyrop. 1:5;8:7.*
[2] *Cyrop. 8:5,19.*

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (5)

SO THAT I MAY ENJOY THE BANQUET OF YOUR LOVE,
I DO NOT DESIRE THE BANQUETS OF TH WORLD.

❖ Belshazzar dared to defile the holy vessels,
and with ignorance I defile my body, Your precious vessel!
Let me enjoy the banquet of Your love, my Savior,
so that I do not desire the banquets of the world!

❖ Your hand was stretched to declare Your judgment of Belshazzar.
Let Your fiery Spirit write the words of Your love in my heart,
so that I may not desire any wise person in the world,
but I may seek Daniel, Your prophet,
and hear Your divine voice inside me!

❖ Daniel despised all the gifts of the king and did not desire richness or authority,
then You gave him grace in the eyes of Cyrus to support Your people in their captivity.
When do I despise the temporal matters?
When do I obtain You,
the treasure of my soul and her inner glory?!
Behold I am in Your hands,
use me as You wish!

CHAPTER 6

DANIEL
IN THE LION'S DEN

This chapter presents the story of throwing Daniel in the lion's den; it is similar to the story of casting the three youths in the fiery furnace.

The two stories confirm God's great power to deliver His believers, who keep His commandments, from great tribulations. **The third chapter presents the determination of the believers not to worship idols, while this chapter presents the eagerness of worshipping God in all circumstances**. The two stories were known during the Maccabees. (1 Mac 2: 59)[1].

Daniel became very old, however his spirit was not old; and the long years of captivity did not change his heart or his faithfulness to God. Although deprived of the spiritual environment, yet he grew in faith and remained young in the heart. Daniel symbolizes the Church, especially at the end of the ages, when people will reject worshipping the Antichrist and the beast. Daniel was a captive, and God demonstrated his love through his faithful prophet Daniel, even during the chastening time.

1. Daniel's position during the reign of Darius 1-3
2. The enemies plotting against Daniel 4-9
3. Daniel's faith 10-15
4. Daniel's tribulation and salvation 16-24
5. The declaration of Darius 25-28

1. DANIEL'S POSITION DURING THE REIGN OF DARIUS

King Darius had no doubt heard of Daniel the prophet, and he might also have seen him when Belshazzar was killed since he was clothed in purple with golden chain around his neck. The king knew that he was the one who interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and the writings on the wall for Belshazzar. Darius had honored Daniel and trusted him, and God used him as a tool to free his people from captivity. However, the devil did not stay quiet, for the more God was glorified in Daniel, the more the devil was stirred to destroy Daniel. The king promoted Daniel to be the second man in the kingdom, nevertheless, the enemy prepared for him a den of hungry lions to devour him and get rid of him.

"***It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm"*** **(1-3).**

We have previously talked about Darius in the fifth chapter. Some historians think that the period of the captivity of Babylon was undetermined. Darius was probably an unknown man, who was entrusted with the kingdom by Cyrus[2].

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[1] *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, Nelson 1959, p. 661.*

[2] منشورات النفير: تفسير الكتاب المقدس، جـ 4، ص 338.

2. THE ENEMIES PLOTTING AGAINST DANIEL

"So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge nor fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God" **(4-5).**

❖ Blessed is the man, against whom the enemies cannot find any charges, except concerning the law of his God[1].

St. Jerome

"So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter" Therefore King Darius signed the written decree" **(6-9).**

It is obvious that Darius was not the king of the Medes Empire only, but of two empires, the Medes and the Persians, as mentioned in the previous chapter, for he was a partner in the reign with Cyrus.

The enemies plotted against Daniel; they envied his greatness, his righteousness and his loyalty to the king. They could not find any charge against him so they plotted to get rid of him.

They convinced the king that the decree of petitioning him would reveal whether the captives were loyal to the king or not.

3. DANIEL'S FAITH

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days" **(10).**

The enemies knew when exactly Daniel prayed, and they could easily watch him from the open windows. The Jews used to pray three times daily[2]: in the morning, while offering the morning sacrifice, at 3:00 p.m. time of offering the evening sacrifice, and in the evening at sunset.

Daniel used to worship in his upper room, referring to the elevation of the soul to meet God above the earthly matters.

❖ The Lord Jesus Christ celebrated the Passover in the upper room (Matt 14). In the book of Acts, it was mentioned that the Holy Spirit came upon the believers (120 men). in the upper room (Acts ch.2). And Daniel, disregarding the king's commands and confident in God, did not pray in a dark place but went to the upper room and opened the windows toward Jerusalem, so that he may feel the peace of God.

St. Jerome

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[1] *PL 25:658B.*

[2] *E. Schurer: A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ, 2, I p. 290, n. 248.*

Moreover, he used to pray according to the commandment of God and according to King Solomon's teaching that they should worship looking toward the temple[1].]

❖ [We have to worship God three times a day. The tradition in the church had set the three times a day as follows: the third hour or 9:00 a.m., when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples (Acts 2: 15); the sixth hour or 12:00 noon, when St. Peter went up the upper room to pray (Acts 10); and the ninth hour or 3:00 p.m., when St. Peter and St. John were on their way to the temple (Acts 3) [2].]

St. Jerome

***"Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king's decree: "Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." So they answered and said before the king, "That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day." And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed"* (11-15).**

St. Jerome said that the king understood the intention of Daniel's enemies who wanted to harm him, and that the enemies, too, understood the intention of the king, who abstained from food until sunset, to put them under pressure them so that they would not ask for Daniel's death. For the king could not change the decree that he had issued, but they could overlook the prayers of Daniel and drop the charge against him. However, they did not take into consideration the act of the king and insisted on applying the decree on Daniel[3].

Daniel could have stopped praying for thirty days until the period of time stated in the decree was over, and he could have prayed secretly in his house with the windows closed, or he could have pretended that he worshiped the idols. However, Daniel found this occasion a good opportunity to declare his faith, therefore he opened the windows and challenged the devil, not to show off but to testify to his faith. Daniel got into the habit of setting special hours of the day, evening, morning and at noon for worship, so did David the psalmist too (Ps 55: 16-17).

The enemies talked against him in hatred, saying: "*This Daniel…*", and the king defended him. But the enemies were firm in their plot, for the king had already signed a decree on which he could not go back.

4. DANIEL'S TRIBULATION AND DELIVERANCE

***"So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, 'Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you"* (16).**

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[1] *PL 25:659.*
[2] *PL 25:660A.*
[3] *PL 25:660A.*

The king realized that the God of Daniel is the God of the impossible, when all human efforts are incapable of any doing, then God's power is revealed.

❖ The king left the plot of casting Daniel in the lion's den to the multitudes, and did not dare to stop their plot but depended on God's power to implement what he could not do. He did not doubt God's power, for he did not say, "If God can save you." But he dared to say, in great assurance, "*Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you*." Definitely, he had heard about the three youths, whom God had delivered from the fiery furnace, and he had heard of the mysteries that were declared to Daniel, thus he regarded him highly regardless of the fact that he is a captive[1].]

St. Jerome

***"Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed"* (17).**

❖ The stone was sealed with the king's seal, so that no one could open it. Daniel was entrusted in God's hand and he was not scared from the lions. The king was worried about Daniel from the people; he sealed the den with the king's seal so that no doubt could enter their hearts about God's deliverance[2].]

St. Jerome

***"Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him"* (18).**

❖ How great was the king's concern! He did not touch any food day or night, and he could not sleep. Because Daniel was in danger, the king was worried about him.

If the king, who did not know God, could not eat and could not sleep because he cared about someone whom he wanted to deliver from evil, then how much we, the believers, should fast and pray asking God's mercy for our many sins! [3]]

St. Jerome

***"Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, 'Daniel, servant of the living God, has Your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"* (19-20).**

❖ The king revealed his inner emotions by crying; he forgot his royal dignity and his triumph over the captives as well as his dominion over his servant Daniel. He called the living God to distinguish him from the other gods, which were like idols for the dead. He did not doubt the power of God whom he trusted, but he uttered these words, without hesitation, so that when he finds Daniel safe he could justify his wrath on the governors[4].

St. Jerome

"***Then Daniel said to the king, 'O king, live forever!"* (21).**

❖ Daniel honored the king, who earlier honored him, and asked that he lives forever[5]]

St. Jerome

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[1] *PL 25:660A.*
[2] *PL 25:660A.*
[3] *PL 25:660A.*
[4] *PL 25:660A.*
[5] *PL 25:660A.*

***"My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also O king, I have done no wrong before you"* (22).**

- He who prays saying, '*Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast*" (Ps 74: 19). is heard. He does not suffer from the serpent, because with Christ, he can trample on serpents and scorpions (Ps 91: 13). He is granted the glorious power by God to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy (Lk. 10: 19). He is not harmed by any of these. Such a person has to thank God, more than Daniel, because He saved him from much wilder animals[1].
- The mouths of invisible lions were shut, so that the visible lions do not harm his soul[2].

Origen

- These beasts could be not harmful, unless they are considered as punishment or as a test of faith to prove the virtues of the believer[3]]

St. Augustine

- Let every saint utters these words, then he is released from the mouths of the invisible lions and from the pit, for he trusts God[4].

St. Jerome

***"Now the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God. And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions - them, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den"* (23-24).**

On the one hand, Daniel's story gives a living picture of the role of man within the community. Daniel lived a holy life and he succeeded to involve his three friends in the holy life too. He served his people in the captivity, served the kings, and the gentiles, and he presented them with prophecies about the coming of Jesus Christ. In the captivity, he served the Lord with no limits because he was closely attached to the Lord.

On the other hand, the corruption, which befell his envious enemies, made them lose their peace. It drove them, their wives, and their children to become prey to the hungry lions and subject to destruction. We should be constructive and do not deviate like Jonah, who escaped from the Lord and because of him a great storm happened. The punishment of the whole family was common in the earlier communities. This contradicted what was mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy 24: 16, in the book of Jeremiah 31: 29, and in the book of Ezekiel chapter 18.

The king failed in rescuing Daniel for he had already signed the decree and sealed it, but God saved him.

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[1] *On Prayer, ch 13:4.*
[2] *On Prayer, ch 16:3.*
[3] *The Literal Meaning of Genesis, Book 15:24.*
[4] *PL 25:662.*

The king was depressed in his castle and he could not sleep. The evil people were plotting against Daniel and were happy for their success of getting rid of Daniel. They were probably plotting to appoint another person to replace Daniel. But Daniel was still alive as if befriending the animals in Paradise, for he experienced the pledge of heaven. When the angel descended and shut the mouths of the lions, this was the happiest night that Daniel had ever lived.

If the king had not cast the evil people in the den, one could have said that the lions were not hungry and that was the reason why they did not do any harm to Daniel. Daniel spent a whole night with the hungry lions in complete peace, whereas the hungry lions could not wait but devoured the evil people as soon as they were cast down and crushed all their bones. This revealed God's mighty hand who saved Daniel and removed any doubt about Him being the true God.

Daniel rested, not because he was saved from physical death, but because he enjoyed a new revelation of God and discovered His deep love, care and concern for him. The king did not rest when he threw Daniel in the den, for he realized that he was unjust and that he had lost a loyal friend, but he had faith in God, the God of Daniel to save him.

Daniel praised God in the lion's den saying with David the Psalmist: "You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore, I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation" (Ps 91: 13-16). The following verses apply to Daniel's enemies: "It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him! Or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it?" (Amos 5: 19-20).

After God saved Daniel, the king decided to punish the evil people and their families who plotted against the righteous Daniel.

5. THE DECLARATION OF DARIUS

"Then king Darius wrote: 'To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions" **(25-27).**

The declaration of Darius was stronger than the declaration of Nebuchadnezzar (3: 29), for it was very positive. Darius was touched by the miracle that happened. He realized that the true God is the God of Daniel, and that He is the eternal, the immortal, who controls heaven and earth to deliver His believers. But this did not mean that Darius became righteous because he still had the pagan worship in his palace. For a period of time, he glorified God temporarily, but he remained in paganism.

The king called God the God of Daniel, as He was previously called the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Because the king did not experience the life with God, he could not say that God is his God. We are in dire need to enjoy our God, who desires to attribute Himself to us, as well as we are attributed to Him and say with Jeremiah the

prophet, "*The Lord is my portion, says my soul*.." (Lament 3: 24). We also hear His voice saying, "*He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son*." (Rev 21: 7).

The king said that God is the Savior who saved and saves Daniel, however, he did not enjoy His divine mercies nor tasted His fatherhood in his private life.

He praised God as Maker of wonders and miracles in heaven and on earth. He knew all what God did with his predecessors and what is being done with Daniel. However, he did not enjoy these miracles in his inner depth and did not submit his body and soul to God like earth and heaven, which God can move with His mighty hand and declare His wonders!

Some people asked how could the den fit 120 satraps with their wives and children? The answer is those who were thrown were only the few satraps who accused Daniel.

According to Persian customs, the relatives of the accused person were punished too, that is why the wives and children were thrown too.

***"So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian"* (28).**

This chapter concludes by saying that Daniel prospered in the reign of Cyrus and Darius. During the kingdoms of the Persians and the Medes, Darius shared with Cyrus the ruling of the kingdom. This statement does not mean that they were two consecutive rulers, and the recent discoveries confirmed that.

Daniel succeeded during the Chaldeans or the Babylonian kingdom where he was exiled and was chosen to serve before the king (ch.1). God gave him grace in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar for interpreting his dreams. But he was excluded from the council of the wise men because of the envy of the magicians, astrologers and the Babylonian wise men. During Belshazzar's last days of life, he was called to interpret the writing on the wall. When Darius and Cyrus invaded Babylon, they gave Daniel special honor; Darius honored him until he died, and Cyrus the Persian, the nephew of Darius, considered him one of the greatest men in his kingdom. Thus, God changed the sorrows of Daniel in the captivity to consolation. Daniel succeeded in his daily life and in his work. He mightily served his generation, as well as the following generations from the Gentiles and the Jews, through the prophecies that were mentioned in the second part of this book.

No doubt that Daniel was sad because he was a captive, like many peoples, which Nebuchadnezzar had dominated. But his sorrow was even bigger because he was deprived of the Promised Land and of enjoying the holy land and the temple of the Lord. However, God had used him for a greater work among the nations and for a better mission, which has its impact on all the generations. Thus God gave him success according to the divine plan and not according to his human thought. He was deprived of the temple in Jerusalem, but he stood before the new temple of God to open the doors of hope before the Gentiles to enjoy the divine holy. Thus, he was able to sing, "*I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness*" (Ps 84: 10). Ezekiel the prophet counted him one of the first three great men: Noah, Daniel, and Job (Ezek 14: 14).

FROM DANIEL'S INSPIRATION (6)

HE CHANGED DEN INTO HEAVEN!

❖ How wonderful is Your care, O You the Almighty!
You allow me to be thrown in the den with Daniel,
however you change the den into paradise!
You grant me to see Your angels,
who minister unto us for salvation and love and work for the sake of Your kingdom inside us!

❖ May You throw me in the den, but may You shut the mouths of the hungry lions so they would not devour me.

❖ In my perplexity, I see that all are against me,
but I see, even among the unbelievers,
Darius the faithful king! I am ashamed of his sincerity and his confidence in You!
For the sake of Daniel, Darius did not eat until sunset and remained fasting until dawn.
He deprived himself of his human rights,
could not sleep and at dawn hurried to the den for the sake of his servant Daniel!

❖ With a sorrowful voice, he called Daniel to find out what happened to him.
The God of Daniel is able to save unto the end!

❖ Darius condemns me!
Do I fast and weep for the salvation of my brothers,
and for the salvation of the whole world?
Do I believe that the God of Daniel is able to save?
Do I give up sleeping as long as there are souls in the den of the invisible lions?
Do I wake up early seeking the salvation of every soul that is drifting away?
What do I answer?

Part Two

VISIONS AND PROPHECIES

(Chapter 7 – 12)

VISIONS AND PROPHECIES

Part one of the Book of Daniel contains some selected events from the life of Daniel and his three companions which revealed God's interest in the very few righteous people, even if they were some captives, deprived of the Promised Land, the Holy City Jerusalem and the Temple of God.

Those events also reveal God's care for His Church even at the time of its redress and confirm that the entire history is in the hands of God, who works through an outdo holy plan.

Part II contains four visions that Daniel enjoyed, which started before the events in Part I took an end, and go parallel, from a historical point of view, with what has been relayed in chapters 5 and 6.

The first vision took place in the first year of the reign of Belshazzar;

The second vision took place in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar;

The third vision took place in the first year of the reign of Darius the Medes;

The fourth vision took place in the third year of the reign of Cyrus.

In those visions, the Holy Spirit presents to us the history of salvation to begin with the days of Daniel until the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. He also presents to us the understanding of salvation as the erection of the kingdom of God in the life of all believers from all nations to enter with them to the heavenly glory. Those visions were to allow the believers from the Jews to accept the Gentiles and together believe in Christ the Savior.

Harrison[1] sees that the general organization of the Book of Daniel reveals that it was written by Daniel himself, or was written shortly after him around mid-fifth century B.C.

THE VISIONS AND THE CONTEMPORARY CRITICS[2]

First, for several long years the critics about those visions initiated many discussions. As I said in the preamble of the book, most of those discussions were focussing on the four temporary empires that they considered as Babylon, Macedonia, Persia and Greece. They believed that the author of the Book made reference to **the existence of the independent state of Medes, which according to them was established between the fall of Babylon and the edification of Cyrus the Persian (5: 13)**[3]**.** In all event, the history of the empire of Medes does not leave room to any of those probabilities[4] as well as a meticulous reading of the book of Daniel confirms that those probabilities were not on the mind of the author.

- It is clear in chapter 5: 28 that Babylon was not shaken before the empire of Medes but rather before a composed empire, in which Persia appears in a greater power than Medes.

- In the management of the empire's affairs, Darius was abiding by the rules of Medes and Persia (ch 6: 8, 12, 15), something that would have never happened if Medes was

[1] *R. K. Harrison: Introduction to the Old Testament, Eerdmans 1988, p. 1127.*
[2] *Cf. R. K. Harrison: Introduction to the Old Testament, Eerdmans 1988, p. 1126ff.*
[3] *Cf. J.G. Eichhorn: Einleitung in das (Altes Testament), 1823 ed, IV, p. 483 ff; S. Davidson: Introduction to the Old Testament, 1862, III, p. 207; R. H. Charles: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel, p. 167 ff.*
[4] *J.C. Whitcomb: Darius the Mede, p.68 ff.*

an independent state at that time, especially that he was not in a state to allow him to change it.

- Besides, the book of Daniel did not mention anywhere that Darius is the king of Medes or of the Medians but rather is related to Medes.

All of the above proof that the second empire is the empire of Persia and Medes combined.

Many scholars believed that the editor of the Book of Daniel had followed what has been mistakenly reported in the book of Isaiah (13: 17 and 21: 2) and in the book of Jeremiah (51:11, 28). They believed that Medes took over Babylon without any reference to Persia, as if the authors of the three books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel wrongfully believed that the kingdom of Medes alone destroys the empire of Babylon.

Rowley[1] had clearly indicated that even though the author of the book of Isaiah had talked about Medes as the shaker of the empire of Babylon he, in fact, meant the combined kingdom of Persia (Elam) and Medes together as stated in the book of Isaiah. "A distressing vision is declared to me; the treacherous dealer deals treacherously, and the plunderer plunders**. Go up, O Elam! Besiege O Media! All its sighing I have made to cease**" (Is 21: 2). The monumental discoveries, as stated by Harrison, indicate that Isaiah and Jeremiah may make reference to Medes as the conqueror of Babylon. For example, the narration of Nabonidus the Babylonian of the events that took place in his time and about his exile in the south of Arabia for ten years is a proof of the ruling of Medes in the year 546 B.C. In other words, four years after the melting of Medes with Persia through Cyrus, for those from Medes who were playing an important role in the overtaking of Babylon could not form an independent army and were an integral component of the Persian army under the leadership of Cyrus[2]. It is now clear that there is no room for confusion in the mind of Isaiah or Jeremiah, even in the mind of Daniel, about the kingdom of Medes and Persia, as many contemporary critics may have believed.

Second, some contemporary critics have also relied on what has been reported in the visions about the small horn (Dan 7: 8 and 8: 9) to think that the contents of the first text refer to Antiochus Epiphanes who was associated with the fourth beast as if the fourth kingdom is Greece and not the Roman Empire. But it is clear that the characteristics of the small horn as reported in (Dan 7: 8) are totally different from those stated in chapter 8: 9 as their functions are also different from one another. The report in chapter 8: 9 is relative to the antichrist who fights the saints of God before the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus Christ as we will find out. However, what has been stated in that chapter talks really about Antiochus Epiphanes, as a symbol of the antichrist, before the appearance of the Roman Empire.

Third, the report on the struggle between the Ptolomies of Egypt and the Seleucusians of Syria as relayed in perfect details in chapter ten, moved some critics to deny that it is in fact a vision and not a history narration of events after they took place. We have previously responded to that thought in the introduction of the book.

FROM HISTORY TO VISION

The Book of Daniel with its two principal parts, the historical part and the vision

[1] *H. H. Rowley: Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel, p.58.*
[2] *D. J. Wiseman. Christianity Today, II, no 4 (1957), p.10.*

part, gives the impression of two separate books; each one has its own style and its own characteristics. However, the unity of the book is quite evident, not only in confirming that God is the controller of history, the founder of spiritual kingdom that extend to the whole world and the Savior of the believers who suffer and will suffer great tribulation, but also in showing the fascinating accord between the two parts of the book in relaying the events that will happen in the future, from Daniel to the end of the days.

CHAPTER 7

THE FOUR BEASTS AND THE SMALL HORN

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM AND DANIEL'S VISION

In this chapter, we find Daniel granted a vision, which was interpreted by the angel himself instead of Daniel interpreting the kings' dreams. This vision does not need any interpretation because it was explained to Daniel.

In general, this vision carries the same meaning of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, as related in the second chapter, but with a different view and some additions. He saw the transfer of the kingdom from the Assyrians to the Babylonians (612 B.C.), from Babylonians to Persians (year 530 B.C.), from Persians to Macedonians (Alexander the Great - year 331 B.C.), and from Macedonians to the Roman Empire which started in the year 63 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar, who symbolizes the ordinary man, saw the great kingdoms of the world represented in the statue of a great man. The statue was made of metal with a head made of bronze. However, Daniel, the spiritual man, saw it represented in four wild hungry beasts talking about the moral issues of the kingdoms of the world. What Nebuchadnezzar saw is the human vision of the four kingdoms, for they focused on wealth, authority, and greatness. However, what Daniel saw represents God's outlook to those kingdoms, where he sees them all as wild beasts that want to devour one another[1]. Nebuchadnezzar saw it from a political point of view, whereas Daniel saw it from a spiritual point of view, which is the victory of the kingdom of goodness and the destruction of evil.

Nebuchadnezzar saw Christ as a small stone growing little by little, but Daniel saw Him as the glorious Son of Man (13-14) who came to establish His spiritual kingdom in the lives of the people.

Nebuchadnezzar did not see the Antichrist, but Daniel saw him as the evil king who will appear at the end of the days.

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's vision were both recorded to benefit the Jewish nation under captivity, the Babylonians and the future generations. However, in this vision, every empire is different from the other, but they all share the same characteristics of violence (four beasts) and irrationality.

1. The history of the vision	**1**
2. The Great sea	**2**
3. The first beast: Babylon	**3-4**
4. The second beast: Medes and Persians	**5**
5. The third beast: The Greek Empire	**6**
6. The fourth beast: The Roman Empire	**7**
7. The small horn	**8**
8. The Ancient Days	**9-12**
9. Like the Son of Man	**13,14**

[1] *See Clarence Larkin: The Book of Revelation, 1919, p. 111.*

10. The interpretation of the vision 15-18
11. The kingdom of Antichrist and the kingdom of the saints 19-27
12. Daniel's worry 28

1. THE HISTORY OF THE VISION

"***In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts***" (1).

Daniel was granted this vision during the first year of the reign of King Belshazzar, the last of the Babylonian kings (year 556 - 539 B.C.). From the historical point of view, this chapter comes before chapters five and six, since the timing of this vision was in the year 555 B.C.

2. THE GREAT SEA

"***Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea***" (2).

By night, that is, before the Sun of Righteousness shone in this world, in the darkness of the evil world, he saw the Great Sea, which we call now the Mediterranean Sea.

1. The boundary of the four great kingdoms was the Mediterranean Sea, and the capital of the last kingdom was Rome, on its coast, thus it is fit that the four animals appear in it.

The sea, in the Bible, is a symbol of nations, peoples, gentiles and tongues. (Rev 17: 15, Lk 21: 25, Is 57: 20).

2. The great sea with its waves refers to the worrisome state or instability. This is a feature that the four kingdoms had in common. The sea is also a state of unrest and anxiety; that is why in the new heaven and the new earth, there is no sea. (Rev 21: 1).

Some people think that the term "Great Sea" does not mean the Mediterranean Sea as mentioned in Isaiah 9:1, but it means the dwelling of Satan, who sends his servants to attack God's kingdom. Some Jews see that the dragon, symbol of Satan, lives in the sea (Is.27:1), and that the watchful Church which works with the mighty hand of God, dries the sea and attacks the dragon. "*Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Are you not the arm that cut Rahab apart, and wounded the serpent? Are you not the One who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that made the depths of the sea a road for the redeemed to cross over?*" (Is 51: 9-10). That is why he sings, saying, "*You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters. You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness*. (Ps 74: 13-14).

The four winds of heaven refer to the hidden stewardship of God; the wind refers to the Holy Spirit who works in secret (John 3: 8), for in the Hebrew and Greek languages, "wind" and "spirit" are the same word. The vision that the prophet saw came from heaven, with God's permission, where God's Spirit works for the kingdom of heaven.

❖ The four winds of heaven were angelic powers, and this is in accordance with what was mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy. "*When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries*

of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deut 32: 8). The sea covered by bitter waves refers to this world, as the Lord explained about the net cast in the sea (Matt 13). And the Lord was described as the king of all creatures that live in the sea, as mentioned in Psalm 73. Also in Amos, it was said, "*And though they hide themselves on top of Carmel, from there I will search and take them; though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, from there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them*" (Amos 9: 3). The four winds of heaven on the great sea are called the "***winds of heaven***," for every angel fulfills his obligations within limits[1].

St. Jerome

Probably what is meant by the "four winds of heaven" is that the four empires will be hanging in the winds, which means that these kingdoms have no stability, and no one can change the events that God had declared.

3. THE FIRST BEAST: BABYLON

***"And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it"* (3-4).**

In verse 17, the four beasts refer to four kings, whereas in verse 23, the four beasts refer to the four kingdoms. It is obvious that each kingdom had its own king. Nebuchadnezzar represented the kingdom of Babylon, while Cyrus represented the kingdom of Persia; Alexander the Great represented the Greek Kingdom (Macedonia), and the beast in Revelation chapter 13 referred to the Roman kingdom.

A lion with eagles' wings represented the Babylonian kingdom; that is, power and the speed of motion distinguish him, for the Babylonian kingdom dominated the whole world in a very short period. In the book of Ezekiel, Babylon was referred to by a flying eagle, which quickly devours its prey.

St. Jerome said: [The fact that Babylon had the wings of an eagle refers to the pride of the mighty kingdom and its ruler, as was mentioned in the book of Isaiah, "*I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High*" (Is 14: 14). That is why it was written: "*If you are elevated like the eagle, I will lower you*" (4). As the lion represents the king of the beasts, the eagle represents the king of the birds[2].]

Daniel saw the wings of the Babylonian kingdom were cut off, which means the kingdom started to decline because it was unable to fly.

When one is known by his bravery, it is said that he has a heart of a lion or "lion hearted" like King Richard. Here, we find a lion with a man's heart. Outwardly, he appears to be like a brave lion among the beasts, but inwardly, he is full of fear like an unarmed man among wild beasts. This is what happened with Babylon during the days of Belshazzar.

St. Jerome translates the Aramaic word "*aryeh*" as a lioness. He said: [The kingdom of Babylon was not called lion but lioness, because of its fierceness and brutality, and moreover because of its indulgence in lusts.] He also said: [The authors of natural history confirm that the lionesses are fiercer than the lions, especially when they

[1] *PL 25:663A, B; 664*
[2] *PL 25:664.*

nurse their cubs, and they are very lustful in intercourse[1].]

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: [When talking about a lioness coming from the sea, it means the kingdom of Babylon, same thing with the head of a golden statue. The wings of the eagle refer to King Nebuchadnezzar who was very boastful of his glory against God. Then, his wings were plucked off, which means that his glory was destroyed, for he was expelled from his kingdom. The words "*It was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it*" mean that he returned to himself and realized that he was a mere person, giving the glory to God[2].]

St. Jerome said: [it is obvious that Nebuchadnezzar after losing his kingdom, the power was removed from him, then he returned to his original state and learned not only to be a man instead of a lioness, but to regain his heart whom he had lost. This can be applied to the kingdom of the Chaldeans too, that is, after the killing of Belshazzar, and the Medes and the Persians took over the empire, the Babylonians realized that they were nothing[3].]

The kings of Babylon were:

1. Nebopolassar is the first to establish the New Kingdom of Babylon after he rebelled against the Assyrians in the North and became independent. In the year 612 B.C., he destroyed Nineveh and burned it.

2. Nebuchadnezzar (606 - 562 B. C.) invaded many places and established the city of Babylon and the temples of Merodach. He also invaded Jerusalem three times (606, 599, 587 B.C.) and during the last invasion he destroyed the temple, which became desolate. The offering of sacrifices ceased during the captivity.

3. Evil-Merodach (562- 560 B.C.) forgave Jehoiachin, the king of Judah.

4. Neriglissar (560 - 556 B.C.) is the brother-in-law of the previous king.

5. Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar, (556 -539 B. C.), gave up the kingdom to his son and in his days, the Babylonian kingdom was abolished. When Cyrus invaded Babylon, he killed Belshazzar but his father remained outside Babylon and abandoned the political work until his death.

4. THE SECOND BEAST: MEDES AND PERSIA

"And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: 'Arise, devour much flesh!" **(5).**

The most important features of a bear are power, violence and timidity. It was known that the kingdoms of Medes and Persia did not use any military skills or swift motions to conquer the countries, but with large numbers of army they invaded the countries. In his battle against the Greeks, Ahasuerus fought against 2.5 million men from the allies when his army was composed of about 5 million men. Upon entering a city, they would demolish it because of their multitude and would cause famine because they captured all the food supplies for the needs of the army[4].

It was raised up on one side, for the kingdom was made up of two nations: the Medes and the Persians. But after a short while, the Persians dominated over the Medes. **St. Jerome** said that the raising up of the bear on one side meant that although the

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[1] *PL 25:664.*
[2] *Cf. AN Frs., vol. 5. p. 178, 209.*
[3] *PL 25:664C.*
[4] *Clarence Larkin: The Book of Revelatien, 1919, p. 109.*

Persian Kingdom was very fierce with other nations, yet it was gentle with the Jews. It treated them differently from the other nations, that is why the kingdom was raised on one side[1].

The three ribs between the bear's teeth are the main Babylonian cities: Babylon, Ecbatana and Borsippa. The army of Cyrus invaded these cities. They may be also referred to the kingdoms of Lydia, Babylon and Egypt[2]. However, **St. Hippolytus of Rome** said that the ribs referred to three nations: Medes, Persians, and Babylon[3], where they all met under the Persian Empire.

The kings of Persia were:

A. Cyrus II (559 - 530 B.C.): Isaiah the prophet called him "the anointed of the Lord" because he forgave the Jews and issued a decree for their return from the captivity of Babylon during the era of Zorobabel, when Cyrus gave him permission to rebuild the temple and restore all its vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar had stolen. Cyrus started his reign in the northern part in the year 559 B.C., and he was able to add Babylon, which was in the southern part, in the year 539 B.C. when he killed Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon who had invaded many places in the Arab island.

B. Cambyses (530 - 522 B.C.).

C. Pseudo-Smerdis (522 B.C.).

D. Darius I (522 -486 B.C.).

E. Xerxes I (486-465)B.C.), the book of Esther.

F. Artaxerxes I (465 - 424 B.C.), the book of Nehemiah.

G. Xerxes II (424 - 423 B.C.).

H. Darius II (423 - 404 B.C.).

I. Artaxerxes II (404 - 359 B.C.).

J. Artaxerxes III (359/8 – 338/7 B.C.).

K. Arses (338/7 – 336/5 B.C.).

L.Darius III (337/6 – 336/5 B.C.).

5. THE THIRD BEAST: THE GREEK EMPIRE

***"After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it"* (6).**

The leopard is normally smaller than the lion, but the one referred to in this verse is bigger because he has four wings and four heads.

The Greek Empire was less greater than the Babylonian Empire, like the leopard being smaller than the lion, however, Alexander the Great was more swift than the Babylonian emperors, that is why the leopard had four wings to allow him to fly in the four directions of the world.

The four wings refer to the multiplied speed and victory, for in ten years, Alexander the Great, the founder of the Greek Empire, in the year 333 B.C. conquered all the Persian kingdom and dominated the entire world, including Egypt and Palestine[4]. The four heads refer to the four divisions of the kingdom after the death of Alexander the Great at the age of 34 years old. His four leaders were Seleucus, king of Syria, Ptolemy,

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[1] *PL 25:665.*
[2] *Ibid 109.*
[3] *AN Frs., vol. 5. p. 178-9.*
[4] *Clarence Larkin, p. 110.*

king of Egypt, Israel and Palestine, the leader Macedonia, and the leader of Thrace.

St. Jerome said: [The victory of Alexander the Great was so fast, for he conquered all the way from the Illyricum to the Adriatic Sea, to the Indian Ocean and the Ganges River. He did not only enter these battles, but he mightily conquered and in four years ruled over all Asia and part of Europe[1].]

In spite of his genius and military ability, we must not forget that all the authority he was given came from God. **St. Jerome** said: [He was given authority; this statement reveals that the greatness of the empire was not due to his bravery but to the will of God[2].]

6. THE FOURTH BEAST: THE ROMAN EMPIRE

This chapter mentioned the Roman Empire, which was symbolized by a beast that Daniel could not compare to any existing beast. Nothing could be more violent and brutal than this empire.

St. Jerome said: [In the previous animals we saw different symbols for terror, but in this case all kinds of terror were found in one animal[3].]

[This is probably to show how terrifying the animal was, to demonstrate how fierce the Romans were; they were like a wild animal that crushed all the rest. Indeed, the Romans tortured the Gentiles and submitted them to slavery and taxes[4].]

The Roman Empire was established in the year 63 B.C., and was extended until it occupied both kingdoms of Babylon and Persia as well as Egypt in the year 47 B.C.

***"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns"* (7).**

This beast, dreadful, terrible, and exceedingly strong, was much stronger than all the other beasts. It had huge iron teeth and brass toes (the Septuagint). This description corresponds to the feet of the statue, which Nebuchadnezzar had seen, some were iron and some were pottery (Dan 2: 33). **St. Hippolytus of Rome** said that the toes, made of iron and pottery, correspond to the ten horns of the beast, which represent the ten kings of this kingdom[5].

This beast was dreadful, terrible and very strong, a description which could not fit any of the previous kings. For instance, Alexander the Great conquered most of the countries of the world, yet his desire was to be famous and not to dominate. When his dreams were fulfilled, he granted freedom to all the countries under his dominion. The Romans however, dominated the world and became harsh rulers; they subdued Asia Minor, Syria, Cecilia, Greece, Macedonia, Spain, Wales, and some parts of Germany. All the countries of the Mediterranean, including Egypt, submitted to the Romans, for they submitted to the taxes imposed by them as well as to their laws. The Romans left some rulers in Asia Minor, but these were spies for them. Julius Caesar was the first to enter Great Britain after subduing Wales that is why the book of Daniel called the Roman Empire dreadful and very strong beast.

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[1] *PL 25:666.*
[2] *PL 25:666.*
[3] *PL 25:666.*
[4] *PL 25:666.*
[5] *AN Frs., vol. 5. p. 178.*

"It had huge iron teeth," which symbolized its fierce attacks and its strong greed. The best crops of the world and all its resources were transferred to Rome, yet the Romans were not satisfied. The Roman Empire never cared about the needs of the colonies but on the contrary, it crushed them. The emperors used to send ambassadors to the colonies with the excuse of keeping their security, but their main goal was spying and transferring all the valuable things to Rome.

Some critics think that this beast refer to the Selecusians, and its ten heads refer to: Seleucus I, Antiochus Soter, Antiochus II, Seleucus II, Seleucus III, Antiochus III, Seleucus IV, Heliodorus, Ptolemy VI, Demetrius, and the strong horn is Antiochus Epiphanes who crushed the last three kings. However, the correct opinion is that the fourth beast refers to the Roman Empire. He is a different beast because the Romans did not impose their culture on their colonies. Their concern was military power and tax collection. Their empire was characterized by its administration and by leaving each country with its own culture.

Some scholars say that the ten horns refer to the ten periods of the Romans persecution. Others see that they represent kingdoms, which will exist during the second stage of history[1].

Some Jews think that it means ten kings will rule Rome, but it is obvious that the number 10 in the Holy Bible means abundance. The Roman emperors appointed governors over the colonies, one over Syria, another over Macedonia, and another over Spain, etc. Those governors had rights like the kings. They could do whatever they liked but they had to submit to the emperor, whom they considered as a god, and had to obey his laws.

7. THE SMALL HORN

"I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words" **(8).**

Porphyry thinks that the small horn, which appeared after the ten horns, was Antiochus Epiphanes, and that the three horns which were plucked out of the ten were Ptolemy VI (Philometer), Ptolemy VII (Euergetes) and Artaraxias the king of Armenia.

St. Jerome refuted that by saying that some Christian critics said that the small horn was Satan or the devil or the son of perdition who dared to sit in the temple of God making himself like God (2 Thess 2) [2].

He also said that it would be impossible to say that the small horn was Antiochus whom Judas Maccabaeus had conquered for how could he say that Judas will be coming on the clouds as the son of man and that he comes before the "Ancient of Days" (13) How can he grant authority and royal power and that all nations and tribes worship him and that his dominion is everlasting[3] (14) If he refers to Maccabaeus, then let those who defend him explain how can the kingdom of the Maccabees have the characteristic of continuity[4].

John Calvin mentioned that some had thought that the small horn was the Pope of

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[1] منشورات النفير: دراسات في الكتاب المقدس، جـ4، ص 344.

[2] *PL 25:667A-668.*

[3] *PL 25:670-671.*

[4] *PL 25:671.*

Rome or the appearance of the Turks. But this opinion was refuted[1]. He also mentioned that the small horn might have been Julius Caesar or any other Caesar like Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero or others. The senate shared the authority of the Caesars to limit it that is why they were compared to the small horn[2].

Since the visions and the prophecies revealed the coming of the Lord Jesus to establish His spiritual kingdom and abolish the violence from the hearts, the devil started attacking the believers. This attack becomes very apparent day after day and it will be especially more evident when the Antichrist will come. Daniel prophesied about this when he mentioned the small horn; also the Lord Jesus Christ talked about it in his teaching about the end of the world (Matt 24). St. Paul also made reference to it (2 Thess.3: 2), as well as St. John the Beloved. (Rev 13).

The small horn symbolizes the Antichrist. This was mentioned in the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament. (Matt 24, 2 Thess.2: 2-8, Dan 7) to emphasize that although the Church will be surrounded by many tribulations, especially in the last days, yet the end result is the victory of the divine plan for the Kingdom of God. If Satan and all his powers attack the kingdom, still the saints will reign with God, not on earth but in heaven. What is written here concerning the Antichrist is identical to what is mentioned in the New Testament.

The characteristics of the small horn were:

A. A little one, mysterious and violent (8), he suddenly appears and conquers kingdoms and establishes a kingdom which resist the Church of God (25) and he terrifies all (28).

B. He is like another king who has the power of Satan and makes himself god. (8, Rev 13: 2, 2 Thess 2: 9).

C. He conquers three kings (8,24).

D. He is very smart and knows how to plan for he has many eyes.

E. He blasphemes and resists God.

F. He looks exciting (20).

G. His kingdom is temporary for a time and two times and a half time; he thinks that he can conquer the kingdom of God and can change times (25), as if he does not know about the divine plan, which conquers all evil.

H. The secret of the victory is the advent of the Lord Jesus:

1. His first advent was when He destroyed the devil by His cross.

2. His second advent will be to reign with the saints in heaven after conquering the Antichrist.

3. The coming of the Lord in the heart is to conquer the kingdom of evil inside us.

8. THE OF TIMES

***"I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened"* (9-10).**

[1] *John Calvin: A Commentary on Daniel, 1986, vol. 2, Oxford, p. 26.*
[2] *Ibid 27.*

After talking about the four empires, which ended by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom in the hearts, Daniel talked about condemning those wicked empires. He saw the eternal God sitting on the throne and He had dethroned all the empires with their authorities, though He had prolonged their lives for a season and a time (12).

He states that God is the Judge, whom he calls the "Ancient of Days" to assure that all the past events are not overlooked. He is the eternal Judge, but because He is patient, He waits for the appropriate time. Since He created us, He offers us many opportunities to enjoy His mercies. Since the beginning of our fall, He awaits our return, but the time will come when He will sit on the seat of judgment to judge according to His justice and righteousness.

Some see in the term "***thrones were put in place***," in Hebrew means that the thrones of kings were removed so that the King of kings alone will judge. Others see in this term that God will sit on His throne surrounded by the heavenly saints and they will rejoice the victory of the believers and the destruction of Satan and his followers.

Probably the thrones here refer to what the Lord Jesus promised His disciples that they would judge the twelve tribes of Israel. God the Almighty will judge all human beings, and the victorious righteous will judge the wicked who will have no excuse. They will be rebuked by the righteousness of their follow-servants who lived with them in this world.

The attributes of God the Judge here correspond to what is mentioned in the Revelation (Rev 1: 1-4 etc.). The Lord Jesus said that He is the Judge of the Gentiles (Matt 25: 31-46).

❖ When a man approaches his end, he becomes in more dignity; but God is the eternal, Ancient of Times and the oldest of all things[1].

St. Clement of Alexandria]

❖ No doubt the man who is judged will be desperate, but when God sits on His throne to bestow on him a reward, then this is a happy man[2].

❖ God's judgment subdues pride that is why the Roman Empire will be destroyed, for it is the horn that utters lofty words[3]]

St. Jerome

❖ When Daniel described God's judgment, He appeared sitting, and he made reference to the books which were opened (Dan 7: 10). No doubt that these books contained people's sins. We are the ones who write these books, which will judge us on the Last Day[4].]

Origen

No one can see God, but He declares Himself to us according to our ability and in a manner that will edify us. Here the revelation presents the conflict between the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ with His saints and the kingdom of the Antichrist. God appeared in a white robe, white like snow, and his hair like pure wool. The white color refers to purity and the heavenly life. Our weapon in the battle is our enjoyment of the heavenly

[1] *Paed. 3:3.*
[2] *On Ps. hom.. 26.*
[3] *PL 25:669D.*
[4] *In Gen. hom. 13:4.*

life, lifting our hearts to heaven and being occupied with our eternal life and keeping oneself pure.

Talking about the fiery inflamed throne and the chariots mean that our depths are changed to a spiritual throne inflamed with the fire of the divine love, with no laziness or negligence but with inflamed spirits like the Cherubim.

In front of Him flows a river, which quenches our thirst, not with water but with holy fire, thus changing our depths to a Paradise carrying the fruits of the inflamed spirit. If the Antichrist is scary and dreadful, yet the children of God, in whom the heavenly river flows, become so powerful that the devil before them cannot stand!

Then, he declares that innumerable heavenly hosts, thousands and ten thousands, desire to serve Him. The heavenly hosts along with the believers stand before Him. The believers have the following traits:

* Heavenly thoughts and purity.
* The fire of love and the inflamed zeal.
* The fire of the daring heart, which never fails.
* They stand in countless numbers.

Origen mentioned the Book of Life in a singular form. Also St. John the Beloved said the same thing in the Revelation (Rev 3: 7, 5: 1-5). Moses, too, said the same thing: "*Yet now, if You will forgive their sin, but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your Book which You have written*" (Ex 32: 32). However, the plural form was used to refer to the books, which track those who are kept for eternal judgment[1].

❖ The closed books will show an accountability of all our performances, every word or thought or even any idle word (Matt 12: 36). Some people think that there are real books in heaven in which our sins are recorded; however these books are symbol of our conscious that will be revealed on that Day, and each one will realize what he has done to himself[2].]

St. Jerome

❖ The conscious of people and their deeds, whether good or evil, are revealed before everyone on that Day. One of these books is the Book of Life, which contains the names of the living, while the other is the book of evil, which the accuser holds in his hands, this one wants to revenge and how cunning he is, we read of him being the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night (Rev 12: 10). This is the earthly book about which the prophet Jeremiah said, "*shall be written in the earth*" (Jer 17: 13) [3].

St. Jerome

9. ONE LOOKS LIKE THE SON OF MAN

"***I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed***" (13-14).

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[1] *Comm. on John, book 5,7.*
[2] *On On Ps. hom. 14.*
[3] *PL 25:669D.*

He comes to reign forever, where the saints enjoy fellowship of glory with Him. **Tertullian**, in his debate with the Jews, clarified that Daniel had prophesied that there are two comings for the Lord Jesus. First, He comes as a small rock, which knocks down the statue of temporal kingdoms, He comes incarnated emptying Himself, however in His Second Coming, He will come on the clouds in His heavenly royal glory[1]

❖ He is the Son of God, He is the Word of the Father, and He is the Son of Man. He was born from St. Mary, and He became the Son of Man[2].

St. Ireneaus]

❖ All authority given by the Father to the Son was revealed to those in heaven, and to those on earth, and to those under the earth and He is the Judge of everyone. (Phil.2: 10). He is the Lord to those in heaven for He is the Word born before all ages; and He is the Lord to those on earth for by His death, He conquered death and preached the Gospel to the spirits in prison (1 Pet 3: 19) [3].

St. Hippolytus

10. THE EXPLANATION OF THE REVELATION

Daniel was worried when he saw this vision, so he approached one of those standing - most probably an angel - asking to be given an explanation of what he had seen. However, Daniel was peaceful when he realized that all these kingdoms, with their brutality and dominion, will one-day end with the kingdom of the saints in heaven, which is preceded by the great tribulation of the Antichrist.

"I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever" **(15–18).**

The prophet Daniel saw all the heavenly hosts standing before the throne serving Him joyfully, for it is written that thousands ministered to Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him (10). This motivates us to serve Him like the heavenly hosts.

St. Clement of Rome said: [As we gather together in harmony, let us cry fervently with one voice to become partakers of His great glorious promises. He is our pride, our rest in Him, let us submit to His and realize that all the angels are assembled to minister to Him[4].]

St. Gregory of Nyssa said: This picture motivates us to desire to be like the angel through the redeeming act of Christ. He said, [We live with Christ because we are crucified with Him, glorified with Him and we reign with Him. The result of our presence with Him is our transfer from the level of the human nature and human dignity to that of the angels, thus Daniel said that thousands stood before Him[5].]

❖ It is appropriate for those who are pure to put simple white clothes. Very clearly,

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[1] *Cf. An Answer to the Jews, 14.*
[2] *Adv. Haer. 3:19:3.*
[3] *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist, 26.*
[4] *1Cor. 34:7,5.*
[5] *On Virginity, ch. 24.*

Daniel said, ***"I watched till thrones were put in place and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow"* (9).** In the revelation, the Lord appeared in white clothes. Also the saints appeared in the same clothes. "*…I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God… Then a white robe was given to each of them…*" (Rev 6: 9, 11). The white color is the natural color for the truth[1].

St. Clement of Alexandria

11. THE KINGDOM OF THE ANTICHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF THE SAINTS

***"Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them"* (19–21).**

Daniel was eager to know the secret of this strange beast. He repeated his description because he realized how dangerous his violent act is.

The other king beside the ten kings is the small horn who knows the Antichrist. He reigns for a time and times and half a time (25).

St. Jerome thinks that a time means a year, that is, the Antichrist will reign for three and a half years (16-23).

- The Antichrist will stir a war against the saints and will glorify himself, attempting to change God's laws and the holy rituals[2].
- The four kingdoms are earthly kingdoms; "*all are from the dust, and all return to dust*" (Eccel 3: 20). But the saints will be granted not an earthly kingdom but a heavenly one[3].

St. Jerome

***"Thus he said: 'the fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and two times and half a time. But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him"* (23-27).**

12. DANIEL'S WORRY

"***This is the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled***

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[1] *Paed. 2:11.*
[2] *PL 25:671,671A.*
[3] *PL 25:671.*

me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart" (28).

Daniel was incapable of completely understanding the vision; therefore he kept it in his heart.

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (7)

A GLORIOUS AND ETERNAL KINGDOM

❖ The world is like a raging sea,
out of which comes wild beasts to devour and dominate!
But Your kingdom is definitely coming to reign over Your saints forever,
Not on transient earth but on new eternal heaven!

❖ This is the last hour!
You are certainly coming to rule!
The Antichrist is entering a decisive battle.
It is a battle of life or death!
May the evil be mortified and the darkness abolished,
And may the kingdom of light shine inside us!

❖ May the Antichrist come.
He is very violent and destroyer of souls!
But You are much stronger and greater!
May Your church be protected until the end of the ages!

CHAPTER 8

THE RAM AND THE GOAT

In the last year of the reign of Belshazzar, when the Babylonian kingdom was about to end, God showed Daniel a new vision about the destruction of the old kingdom, so that he may not be astonished when he sees the destruction of Babylon. Many thought that Belshazzar will mock Cyrus and Darius, and that their attack upon Babylon does not deserve the concern of Belshazzar. But God revealed, more than once, to Daniel the destruction of Babylon then Persia. Daniel enjoyed seeing a new vision, which confirmed the first vision and which explained it in more detail, by revealing the extremely evil role which Antiochus Epiphanes played in the Old Testament, and the Antichrist at the end of days. This vision had weakened Daniel and made him perplexed, but **St. Hippolytus of Rome** said that it serves the purpose of the edification of the believers[1].

1. Introduction to the vision	**1-2**
2. The vision of the ram	**3-4**
3. The vision of the goat	**5-8**
4. The small horn	**9-14**
5. The explanation of the vision	**v.15-27**

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE VISION

This vision was fulfilled just before the fall of Babylon, for Daniel saw himself in Shushan, the capital of Elam, west of Persia, east of Babylon and south of Medes.

***"In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, to me, Daniel, after the one that appeared to me the first time"* (1).**

Daniel was granted to see what is happening in the future, to be far sighted and see things that no one else beside him can see, and which some might even think of as impossible. This gift is granted to the faithful soul, which is thrown in God's bosom, so He lifts her with the wings of a dove to see what is beyond the times.

This vision was seen two years after the first one, i.e., shortly before the fall of Babylon (Dan. 5), thus ignoring the vision of the Babylonian Empire and revealing the kingdoms of Medes and Persians (the ram), which the Macedonian kingdom (the goat) attacked.

***"I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai"* (2).**

The city of Shushan, or Susa, is described as a fortress and was the capital of Persia. Like Babylon, it became the capital of the Persian Empire. It was located 250 miles east of Babylon, therefore one capital was used in the winter and the other one in the summer then it became the capital of Cyrus. Daniel was in the palace in Babylon, but because he saw himself in the vision by the River Ulai, some people then thought that Daniel was in the city of Shushan. But this is unacceptable, because it is impossible for Daniel the captive to leave Babylon and go to Shushan in Persia. However, that is how he saw himself in the vision. Perhaps God had permitted it so that Daniel may know that as he served God's people during the Babylonian reign, he will serve them again during the Persian reign. Most probably the palace in Shushan was not built yet, for the Persian

[1] *AN Frs., vol. 5, p. 179.*

Empire had not flourished yet.

2. THE VISION OF THE RAM

In the previous vision Daniel saw four animals, but here he saw two animals, the first is a ram with two horns.

Babylon was about to collapse before Medes and Persia; Daniel saw a ram standing by the river. The ram had two horns; one was higher than the other. **St. Hippolytus of Rome** said: [This ram which attacks west, north, and south, make reference to King Darius, the king of the Persians who conquered all the Gentiles, for it is written that no animal stood before him[1].]

"Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor was there that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great" **(3-4).**

Since Daniel felt that he was called to see divine visions, he lifted his eyes. The vision indicated the appearance of the kingdoms of the Persians, the Medes and the Greeks. In essence, the vision touches the eternity of the believers and their enjoyment of what is above. We cannot ignore the history and the time; however God lifts up our eyes to see His hidden plan, which works beyond history.

In great accuracy, the ram with two horns likened the kingdom of Persia, with one horn higher than the other, because Persia became greater than Medes. Cyrus the Persian married his cousin, Cyaxares. Darius had a weak personality compared to Cyrus the Persian who surpassed his father-in-law. However, he kept him as a partner in the rule, thus the prophecy was literally fulfilled.

The two horns here match the two sides of the bear in the previous revelation where it was raised up on one side (7: 5), and match the shoulders of the great metal statue (Colossus) in Nebuchadnezzar's dream that was mentioned in the second chapter. The pushing of the ram symbolizes the fast victories of the Persians.

Cyrus was likened to the ram and the other kings, who were likened to the animals, were not able to withstand him.

Marcellinus said that the king of Persia used to wear on his head the head of a ram instead of a crown[2].

3. THE VISION OF THE GOAT

"And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power" **(5-6).**

The ram, with power and authority, appeared in the vision pushing every animal that he met, and then an enemy appeared, which was the goat, with a notable horn between his eyes. The prophet saw the goat coming from the west, making reference to Greece, which is located west of Persia. The goat was very swift to the point that his legs did not touch the ground (5). He and his army were like a bird flying in the air. The

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[1] *Cf. AN Frs., vol. 5, p. 179.*

[2] القس عبد المسيح بسيط، ص 116.

kingdom of Persia was compared to the ram while the Greek Empire was compared to the goat; for the goat is swifter than the ram, and thus was Alexander the Great, faster in his movements.

The ram was conquered, his two horns were broken and he fell on the ground; he had no power to withstand the goat (7).

***"And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him; attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand"* (7).**

This was a true vision for it was fulfilled 200 years later. Here God revealed to his prophet the victory of Alexander the Great who dominated the whole East. He went through many battles especially against Persia which had dominated many countries and which was compared to the ram that pushed in all directions.

The goat reached the ram, something no one had expected to happen, for the great cities were fortified, and especially that a big distance separated Persia and Greece. However, Alexander the Great conquered Persia very fast; he conquered Darius in two battles and during the second battle killed Darius.

Some historians said that Alexander the Great was called the son of the god Jupiter, Amon, who was symbolized by a goat. Many historical pictures were discovered showing a goat with a unicorn as a symbol of the old Greek armies.

***"Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven"* (8).**

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: [What the male goat means was Alexander the Macedonian coming from Greece. Alexander went to war against Darius and conquered him as well as all his army and became the ruler over all kingdoms. After the goat was glorified, his horn got broken and four horns appeared instead. This was a reference to Alexander the Great who became ruler over all Persia, but after his death, his kingdom was divided among four rulers[1].]

The goat became very great, but when his large horn got broken, four notable ones replacing it came up toward the four winds of heaven (8). When Alexander the Great died, his kingdom was divided into four: Macedonia, Turkey, Syria, and Egypt. The historians are in discord about the cause of his death. Some say that he died because of illness; others say that he died because he was poisoned. Before his death, he was asked who does he wish to succeed him. In his pride, he couldn't find anyone that deserves that position. He had two sons, one from Roxana the daughter of Darius, and the other son was called Aridaeus, but he thought neither one could succeed him, as if he was indispensable. When he became unable to talk, he took off his royal ring and gave it to Perdiccas. After his death, there were many attacked and fifteen of the generals were killed.

Cassander, the son of Antipater, became king over Macedonia, after killing Olympus the mother of Alexander, his sister, his son, his wife Roxana and many relatives. The leaders lost trust in one another, and each one was afraid of the other, and the spirit of treason prevailed between them. Then fifteen years after the death of Alexander the Great, the kingdom was divided into four divisions:

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[1] *Cf. AN Frs., vol. 5, p. 180.*

a. Macedonia, where Cassander, the son of Antipater, ruled. Some parts of Thrace with some cities of Greece joined it.

b. Syria, Babylon and all the kingdoms of the East, where Seleucus Nicanor ruled.

c. Asia Minor, where Antigonus ruled. Phrygia and Paphlagonia and all the Asian regions joined when five or six generals were killed.

d. Egypt, where Ptolemy the son of Lagos ruled.

These were the four notable horns, which prevailed in the East, West, North, and South.

4. The Small Horn

***"And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered. Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, 'How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under-foot?' And he said to me, 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."* (9-14).**

Who is this small horn of the Old Testament, other than Antiochus Epiphanes, who is a symbol of the Antichrist in the end of the days. He was called the small horn, not because he was compared to the rest of the kings of his era, but because no one expected him to reign after his father. But he ruled because of his craftiness. Epiphanes ruled over Syria (the kingdom of the North for the Greek Empire), in the year 175 B.C. Daniel talked about this in more details in chapter 11:21-35. Antiochus Epiphanes was called the most defiled person in the Old Testament who persecuted the Jews. After the death of his brother, he met the people and pretended to be very gentle until they appointed him king then he deceived them. He killed a pig and sprinkled his blood on the altar and on the holy vessels and prohibited offering the daily sacrifices, lest they be killed.

- As Antiochus Epiphanes conquered Egypt, he went to Jerusalem and entered the temple. He took all the vessels, the golden lampstand, the sanctuary and the table, and ordered the biggest slaughter on earth, as it was written, the sanctuary was trampled underfoot for 1300 days. The holy temple became desolate for three and a half years, thus fulfilling the 1300 days. When Judas Maccabaeus appeared after the death of his father Matthias, he conquered Antiochus, saved the city, sanctified the holy places and restored the Law[1].It was descript in book of Maccabeus

St. Hippolytus of Rome

Antiochus Epiphanes went toward the south that is toward Egypt. He wanted to occupy Egypt, but the Senate sent him Pompilius asking him to leave Egypt. Due to his craftiness, he asked the prophet to give him some time until he leaves Egypt, however, the prophet told him, "You have to give me an answer, and do not deceive me by saying that you are asking for a counsel." Antiochus Epiphanes had to leave Egypt; however, he

[1] *Cf. AN Frs., vol. 5., p. 180.*

entered into war against Ptolemy Philopatir, the king of Egypt.

He headed toward the east then after, for his kingdom extended until Ptolemais, and in Persia he fought those who rebelled against him.

Then moved toward the glorious land, that is the Promised Land "Canaan." As it was written in the book of Jeremiah, "…*And give you a pleasant land, a beautiful heritage of the hosts of nations?*" (Jer 3: 19). "*You have given them this land, of which You swore to their fathers to give them - a land flowing with milk and honey*" (Jer 32: 22). It was also called the glorious land because the glorious temple of the Lord was in Judah. Antiochus fought the Jews and defiled their temple.

Antiochus, or Antichrist, bragged over all the hosts, and he cast down some of the hosts and some of the stars to the ground (10), thus God revealed to his prophet Daniel that His Church is heaven and that the believers are the host of Christ and His stars.

Antiochus attacked the church of the Old Testament and killed many; likewise the Antichrist will exert all his efforts to attack the stars of the New Testament. The Lord Jesus Christ said about His Second Coming, "*Whether the Son of Man will find faith on earth*?" and that the Antichrist will even deceive the chosen ones.

The matter does not stop at the stars of heaven and its host but the Antichrist tries to brag over the Prince of the hosts, i.e. the high priest, whom Antiochus had persecuted. **St. Jerome** said that the chief host means God Himself[1], the Lord of hosts. Antiochus had defiled the entire temple and prohibited offering the permanent offering "*endelekhismos*," thus abolishing the temple of God**. St. Jerome** said that Antiochus had done that, not because of his bravery but because of the sins of the people[2]. This symbolizes what the Antichrist will do, making himself a god.

Moreover, he did not only oppose the worship of God but he defiled the divine teachings, for he said that *he cast truth down to the ground* (12). Thus, the vision correlated the worship and the correct teachings, for the devil can cast truth down to the ground but he cannot cast it from heaven. Hence, anyone living in heaven carries the truth in him beside the spiritual worship.

Since Daniel's heart was raised up to heaven, he saw an angel asking another angel. Some people think that he was asking the Word of God: "***How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation?***" (13). the angels do not know all the mysteries (Eph. 3:10), but due to their love of the human race and their longing to the perfect glory, they ask about things which pertain to the Church lest the tribulation may prolong and the believers may lose their faith and their crowns.

The scholars differed about the small horn.

a. Some people think that Antiochus Epiphanes is the small horn mentioned in chapter 7.

b. Others say that the small horn mentioned in chapter 7 refers to the Antichrist, while the small horn mentioned in this chapter (8). refers to Antiochus Epiphanes, who was the Antichrist of the Old Testament.

c. Another opinion mediates between the two previous opinions by saying that the small horn in chapter 8 refers to Antiochus who in turn refers to the Antichrist. In chapter 7, Daniel refers to the Antichrist in a direct way, but in chapter 8 he refers to him in an indirect way.

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[1] *PL 25:674.*
[2] *PL 25:674.*

Regarding the period of cleansing the sanctuary, which is 2300 days, **St. Jerome** says that this equivalent of 6 years and 3 months, which is the period since Antiochus attacked the worship until Judas Maccabaeus conquered him[1]. However, **St. Hippolytus of Rome** thinks that 2300 include mornings and evenings, which means 1150 days (2300 divided by 2); when morning and evening daily sacrifices were prohibited during the persecution. This is equal to three and a half years, where Judas Maccabaeus cleansed the temple after Antiochus had defiled it.

Many interpreters think that 2300 mornings and evenings confirm that they were true days, which correspond to 6 years, 4 months, and 20 days. It should be noted that a year in the Holy Bible is equal to 360 days, a month is equal to 30 days. This is the period, which started on August 5, 71 B.C., that is, since the desolation, where there were conspiracies with Jason the chief priest, and the king promised to pay him 260 silver coins. The chief priest permitted him to build a store to teach the Jewish youths the pagan customs and call them the Antiochians. Thus the priests despised the temple of God and the sacrifices, and were occupied with the Greek sports. It was written in the book of Maccabees: "*In those days lawless men came forth from Israel and misled many saying, 'Let us and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us, for since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us. This proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king. He authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil*" (1 Mac 1: 11-15). According to Daniel's prophecy, since the restoration of the temple and the purification of the sanctuary on December 25, 165, this period is 2300 days. This constitutes the period where all the catastrophes had befallen the temple during the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, since the desolation until the end of the period of annulling the permanent offering, when Maccabaeus saved the Jews from Antiochus.

The grievous events, which had befallen Jerusalem during that time, were as follows:

a. Jason's appointment to chief priest, and his participation with Antiochus in pagan defilement.

b. Antiochus attacks Jerusalem, enters the temple and plunders all the vessels offering a pig on the altar. (1 Mac 1: 20-28).

c. Two years later when the news of his false death was announced, the Jews rejoiced. Apolonis, one of his commanders, was sent to burn the city, destroy its walls and build a citadel on a mountain overlooking the temple. (1 Mac 2: 29; 2 Mac 5: 11-14).

d. The official date of prohibiting offering sacrifices in the temple (1 Mac 44: 51) was during the month of June in the year 197 B.C.

As for what had happened to the Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes, we differentiate between two major periods:

A. The period of 2300 days started by the reign of Jason the high priest and ended by the victory of Judas Maccabaeus.

B. The period of 1290 days, that is approximately three and a half years, started by the abolish of the permanent sacrifice, the erection of the statue of Jupiter in the

[1] *PL 25:675C.*

temple and the defile of the vessels after Antiochus had overtaken Jerusalem by his commander Apolonis[1].

5. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION

"Then, it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, 'Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." **(15-16).**

Daniel wanted to understand the vision in a clearer way, for he knew little. That is why for his benefit and for the benefit of the church, he desired a clearer interpretation. He saw one having the appearance of a man. Most probably this was the Word of God before the incarnation, which had the authority to command Gabriel the archangel to interpret the vision (16). When God, who knows the inner heart, sees the yearning of someone toward the truth, He reveals it to him and asks His heavenly ministers to reveal to him some of the hidden mysteries.

"So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, 'Understand, son of man, the vision refers to the time of the end. Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. And he said, 'Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be" **(17-19).**

St. Jerome said about the angel calling Daniel "*son of man*": [Since Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah were always in the company of angels, God wanted to remind them of their weaknesses lest they fall in pride. He did not want them to think that they partake of the angelic nature or dignity that is why they were called sons of men[2].]

Daniel fell in fear as soon as the archangel approached him. Daniel might have felt the seriousness of the vision and God's firm intention to reveal its mysteries to him. He recorded this for us so that we may not belittle the vision or its interpretation. We have to set our minds and our lives to understand this vision, through the spirit of diligence and seriousness. The angel made it clear that this vision is for the time of the end (17), which means that it pertains to the future. He probably meant that it would be fulfilled during the days of Antiochus, especially before the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He emphasized that the vision will be definitely fulfilled, but in due time.

The archangel woke him up from his deep slumber and assured him that the small horn will be destroyed. It was said that when Antiochus died the worms ate his body, like Herod Agrippa the First (Acts 12). Likewise, the Antichrist and his kingdom will be destroyed.

"The ram which you saw, having the two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper

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[1] المتنيح القس منسى يوحنا: كتاب حل مشاكل الكتاب المقدس 1982، ص112 الخ.

[2] *PL 25:677F.*

***and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. Through his cunning, he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human means"* (20-25).**

He called Antiochus a king with fierce features because he was a very severe and strict type of person. He also said that he understands sinister schemes, which means that he was extremely cunning.

Daniel prophesied that Antiochus will destroy many in their prosperity (25). This prophecy was fulfilled when Antiochus sent his commander with 22,000 men to Jerusalem under cover of a mission of peace. The soldiers used to treat people very gently, they also used to go in and out until the Jews got used to that. On a Sabbath while the Jews were worshiping in the temple, a command was issued to slaughter them all. Thousands were killed on that day; thus he destroyed many in their prosperity[1].

Daniel also prophesied that he will rise against the Prince of princes and shall be broken without human hand (25). This, again, was fulfilled when Antiochus Epiphanes attacked God Himself, the King of kings, in his temple. His attack on the temple lasted for 6 years (2300 days). Then the Maccabees attacked him and threw out his army, at that time the temple was cleansed and victory was proclaimed. Under the leadership of the Maccabees, the statue of Jupiter Olympias was removed from the temple. The anger of Antiochus aroused and he decided to eradicate the entire Jewish race, at that time he felt severe pain in his bowels and died instantly. Hence, the divine providence caused his death without any human means[2].

***"And the vision of the evenings and mornings which was told is true; therefore seal up the vision, for it refers to many days in the future. And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood i*t" (26, 27).**

The vision of the evenings and mornings, which was told, is true (26), means that the vision had two sides: the gloomy side which refers to the great tribulation and the joyful side which refers to the triumph of God's people.

Daniel could not bear the vision therefore he became sick and unable to leave his bed. He was scared about what will befall the church whether during the times of Antiochus or the times of the Antichrist. As **St. Jerome**[3] said He went to perform the works of the king, thus rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Lk. 20: 25).

However, Daniel could not comprehend all the mysteries of the vision and therefore was astonished by the vision.

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[1] *Boyd's Bible Handbook, p. 309.*
[2] *Boyd's Bible Handbook, p. 309.*
[3] *PL 25:677F.*

THE FOUR EMPERORS IN DANIEL

Daniel 2	***Daniel 7***	***Daniel 8***	Empire	Date
The golden Head	**A winged lion**		**Babylon**	**626 B.C.**
Chest and arms of silver	**A bear**		**Medes and Persians**	**539 B.C.**
Belly and thighs of bronze	**A leopard**	**Ram**	**Greek (Ptolomies, Seleucusians) Maccabees**	**330 B.C.** **167 B.C.**
Legs of iron		**Goat**	**Roman**	**63 B.C.**
Feet of iron and clay			**Fall of Jerusalem**	**70 A.D**

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (8)

I BECAME PERPLEXED
AND I DO NOT UNDERSTAND

❖ Gabriel the archangel accompanied your prophet Daniel,
And showed him some interpretation of your mysteries.
Daniel cried because his body became very weak,
And was astonished by the vision because he did not understand it.

❖ May You reveal to me the mysteries of Your love,
So that I may see the history under Your control,
And see my life the subject of Your concern!
Let Your angels accompany me,
But remind me of my weaknesses lest I become self-conceited.
May I remember that I am a weak human being, but with You I become strong and understanding!

❖ May the mighty kingdoms succeed one another,
And the Antichrist appears.
But You alone are the fortress of the church and her power!
You will never allow the Antichrist to reign except for a limited time!
His kingdom will end and Your saints will reign forever in heaven!

CHAPTER 9

THE SEVENTY WEEKS

Since Daniel had great love for his people, and even to all humanity, God granted him wisdom, understanding and the gift of prophecy. He interpreted the dreams for the kings, as well as the visions pertaining to the future of the whole world. Now in his old age, as he noticed that God had promised the return of God's people from captivity after seventy years, as mentioned in the book of Jeremiah, he started asking God, with humility, to forgive his people. God granted Daniel the vision of the seventy weeks in which He revealed to him not only the return of the people to Jerusalem, but also the return of the entire human race to the divine bosom. He determined to him the time for the divine incarnation and the offering of the unique Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This prophecy was to redress the Jewish misinterpretations, for the Jews thought that after the captivity they would establish a Jewish glorious kingdom. However, the Word Incarnated was coming to establish a kingdom by His Self- Sacrifice to grant the believers' inner glory and not a temporary kingdom.

1. Daniel studies the prophecies	**1-2**
2. Daniel a man of prayer	**3-19**
3. The prayer answered	**20-23**
4. The vision of the seventy weeks	**24-27**

1. DANIEL STUDIES THE PROPHECIES

"***In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of Chaldeans***" (1).

The events of this chapter took place after the fall of Babylon, in the first year of the reign of King Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, around the year 537 B.C. according to the historian Zenofon. Only one year before Cyrus allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem. The name Ahasuerus was common at that time among the kings of Persia and Media.

"***Was made king***," means that Darius did not become king because of his own integrity, but because he received this kingdom from Cyrus, his nephew and his son-in-law.

"***In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem***" (2).

Daniel appears not only as a prophet, but also as one who studies prophecies (Jer. 25: 9-11; 29: 10; 31: 38; 2 Chron 36: 21). He studies the word of God and the prophecies and mingles his study with his prayers. He prays three times a day, and his study was not to fulfill mental sensation or to satisfy his curiosity, but rather to enjoy the promises of God. Daniel grew old and retired. He spent about 69 years in the captivity from year 606 B.C. to 537 B.C. (until the moment of this vision). However, his heart did not grow old nor did he quit God's work as a man of God, but as time passed, he was filled with power and hope in God's true promises. That is why Daniel resorted to the Holy Bible to find in it the treasure of these promises. He mingled his study of the Holy Bible with the ascetic life, prayer with contrition before God.

"***I, Daniel, understood by the books***" (2): Some liberal critics think that the word "***books***" in the Hebrew language means that Daniel was speaking of a perfect law that governs the books of the Old Testament, however, they also think that this law was not

established until the second century before Christ. The critics say that they founded their opinion on the beliefs of the past three centuries; however, the scientific studies and the research have annulled these thoughts based on the following:

First, the prophets did not write their books to hide them, but on the contrary, people used to learn by heart what was written in the books of the prophets even before they were written because the Holy Spirit revealed the contents of the books to the people.

Second, these books were assembled in the temple by the people especially the prophets and the scholars of religion. The original copy was put in the temple, and other copies were put in the synagogues, which were built for the Jewish worship as a temporary substitute of the temple. All what was written before Daniel, he had a copy of it[1].

2. DANIEL A MAN OF PRAYER

When Daniel opened the Holy Bible and discovered the treasures of the heavenly promises, he realized that enjoying these treasures require prayers mingled with fasting, humility and contrition. This chapter revealed Daniel's personality as a man of prayer. In his prayer we get the picture of a living man in the presence of God. We notice in his prayers here the following:

a. Prayer as a lively meeting with God: When Daniel realized that he was not ready spiritually for God's promises, he prayed to God confessing his sins and confessing God's righteousness (3-14). Thus, Daniel admits that he is awaiting God's divine work, not because he deserves it or even his people do i.e. .not due to human righteousness [18].

"***Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes***" (3).

To Daniel, prayer was not a matter of routine or a duty he has to perform but rather a pleasure to see God's face, for he said, "*I set my face toward the Lord God*." He enters into dialogue with God with the spirit of love and humility. Thus he fulfilled what Solomon the wise man had said on the inauguration day of the temple: "*When they sin against You (for there is no one who does not sin). and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to the land of the enemy, far or near; yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of those who took them captive, saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness; and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their father, the city which You have chosen and the temple which I built for Your name; then hear in heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause*" (I kings 8: 46-49).

b. Daniel did not weaken his faith regarding God's promises.

- Daniel asked God, with sackcloth and ashes, to fulfill His promises, not because he lacked the faith about what will happen in the future, but rather to avoid the danger of heedlessness which creates rebellion against God[2].]

St. Jerome

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[1] القس عبد المسيح بسيط أبو الخير: إعجاز الوحي والنبوة في سفر دانيال، ص 62.

[2] *PL 25:678.*

c. The feeling of a personal relationship with God:

Daniel said and repeated, "*The Lord my God*" (4, 20). He was confessing his sins and the sins of the people, nevertheless he did not approach God with fear but with trust and confidence in God, his personal Friend, who keeps His promises.

"***And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments***" (4).

❖ And I prayed, "O Lord great and awesome God" meaning that You God are awesome to those who neglect Your commandments[1].

St. Jerome

d. Daniel felt that he is sharing the sins of his people: He does not blame them alone but he blames himself with them. He presents the subject of his prayer and confession by mingling the greatness of the awesome God and His mercy with the confession of his sins and the sins of his people. He started his prayer by glorifying God for His surpassing care of His people.

Daniel knew that God fulfills His promises to those who keep His commandments. The Bible links between God's covenant and His divine promises, for the covenant is based on His mercies. A believer feels that God is faithful in His promises, but the believer has to prepare himself to enjoy God's promises and mercies, by declaring his faith and trust in God and at the same time confessing his sins. "*God is faithful, by whom You were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord*" (1 Cor 1: 9). "*God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able…*" (1 Cor 10: 13). "*But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one*" (2 Thess 3: 3).

"***We have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments***" (5).

While Daniel keeps confessing his sins, he declares that what had happened to him and his people was due to their sins. The captivity was a just chastening because of their rebellion. They cannot complain about the brutality of the enemy who made them captive and about all the financial losses and shame. **St. Jerome** said: [Daniel looked at the sins of the people as though he is the one who committed them, because he considered himself one of them. The same applies to St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans[2].]

When we approach God by confessing our sin, we have to feel that we are guilty and that we are pleading to win His mercy and love.

In his confession, Daniel used more than one expression, from these:

- "*We have sinned*": this is associated with the word "Satan," for the nature of Satan is to sin. When we sin, we reject God's fatherhood and we admit that we are children of Satan. As the Lord Jesus said to the Jews, "*You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do"* (John 8: 44).
- "*And committed iniquity*," meaning that we committed lawlessness.
- "*We have done wickedly*," that is our behavior became inappropriate.

[1] *PL 25:678.*
[2] *PL 25:678-679.*

- "*And rebelled*," rebellion is worse than sin, for it is considered defiance to God's commandment and His judgments. Rebellion is rejection to the divine light, as David the Psalmist said, "*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*" (Ps 119: 105).

"***Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land***" (6).

Daniel did not justify sin, but on the contrary he justified God's chastening to His people. God had warned them through His prophets, however they all have committed sin, from the leaders to the people.

"***O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You***" (7).

Since they all fell under God's wrath, yet God is righteous in His wrath, they deserved the shame of face that is confessing their sins before Him. As St. Paul said, "*Let God be true but every man a liar, as it is written, 'That You may be justified in Your words and may overcome when You are judged'*" (Rom 3: 4). We cannot glorify God, while we are committing sins falling under His chastisement, until we confess our sins and realize the wisdom of God in chastising us. By saying "*Those near and those far*," Daniel meant the people of Judah and the people of Israel, but there were more people from Israel scattered and captured than from Judah. They were expelled from their land because of their treason, so it is appropriate for them to confess their sins in shame of face.

"***O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him***" (8-9).

Daniel continues confessing his sins and the sins of his people before God. The kings and the leaders deserved the shame of face because it was written in the book of Isaiah: "*From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment*" (Is 1: 6).

"***We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him***" (10-11).

Israel has committed two major transgressions:

1. Disobedience to God's Law, which was clearly evident among them. God has manifested His righteousness, His will, His commandments plainly through His Law, which made the people deserving a double punishment when they disobeyed.

2. Inattention to the voice of the prophets who had warned them.

Daniel did not try to justify the people's error, but He emphasized God's faithfulness in His promises. Once more, he emphasized that it was communal transgression for which God's wrath was poured on all the people. He mentioned the word poured or "*tittach*" which is used in melting metals and pouring it on the bodies of criminals. Thus, was the feeling of the captives because they were deprived of their

temple and their country. Their souls were bitter when God chastised them. However, God has warned them since He chose Moses their first leader, therefore, they had no excuse! Daniel considered every transgression directed toward God Himself. (11).

St. Jerome commented on this expression by saying: ['The curse …have been poured on us' meaning do not pour on us all Your wrath for we cannot endure it, but pour only a drop of Your wrath so that we may return to You when we fall into Your snare[1].]

"***And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster, for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem***. (12).

Moses the prophet foretold all the chastisement that befell God's people. God had previously warned not only the people but also the judges, for no one is above the divine Law. No one can brag before God, and no one can escape the divine chastisement, no matter how high his position is, or whether he holds a religious or carnal position. The leaders were given authority from God, but within the limits of His Law and will. The authority granted to them cannot cover their sins and does not protect them from the chastisement.

The captivity years were as long as 70 years, however the people did not move to repent or to accept the divine truth.

God has chosen Jerusalem as His holy city, but when it sinned and rebelled and did not repent, God has vigorously chastised the people (12).

"***As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth***" (13).

Daniel admits that God has chastised them, yet they have not benefited from that chastisement for the following reasons:

I. They have not pleaded God. They indeed have prayed whether individually or as a group, but these were superficial prayers with hypocrisy, for their hearts were not lifted up to heaven nor were they in true dialogue with God. Their prayers did not come out of a living faith or of a true repentance.

II. They did not repent, thus they didn't meet with the **Divine** God, and He didn't hear their prayers.

III. They did not understand God's truth, for they abided by human wisdom and ignored God's wisdom. The whips of the chastisement did not drive them to wisdom, but rather they remained in their foolishness, by saying, "*That we might turn from our iniquities and understand your truth"* (13). He links between the holy life and the true faith or the divine truth, as well as he links between the evil behavior and the deviation from the truth. **St. Jerome** said, [Consider God's Truth is equal to repenting from evil[2].]

Daniel connects between prayer or supplication to God and repenting from sin and enjoying the divine wisdom and truth.

"***Therefore the Lord has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice***" (14).

"***Has kept***" this verb means the alertness of the mind and it is used with the guards who are awake night and day to guard the cities. All the disasters that had happened were

[1] *PL 25:678-679.*
[2] *PL 25:678-679.*

not done haphazardly, but God who guards the soul and who cares for her salvation allows the disaster, or what we may think is evil, to happen. He was very patient for many generations, though He may appear to be severe, and in due time allowed the captivity for the chastisement of His people.

❖ Whenever we are rebuked for our sins, God keeps an eye on us and chastises us. But when God forsakes us, then we are not worthy of His chastisement, as if He is asleep and not paying any attention to us, as it is written in the Psalms, "God arises as though He was asleep…" (Ps 78) [1].]

St. Jerome

Daniel confirmed in this book that all the tribulations we meet in life are not done haphazardly, but according to the providence of God the Almighty, lest we deprive God of His surpassing care for His creation and misunderstand His might and justice.

During our tribulation, he emphasizes that God is "our Lord" who cares for us. We have to hear His voice and understand His plan and doctrines, not only through the commandments but also through His chastisement and his permission for suffering! He takes us into the school of chastisement and reveals to us the philosophy of suffering!

"***And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly!***" (15).

Daniel the prophet confessed his sins and the sins of his people, as well as he admitted that they were justly chastened, which revealed his confidence that God is the Savior of his people. He remembered the experience of God's salvation from the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and now He can take them out from Babylon to glorify His holy name. Daniel believed that God who worked in the past is still working in the present.

"***O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people are a reproach to all those around us***" (16).

We deserve death because of our multiple evils and sins, yet Your righteousness and mercies are innumerable, therefore, we ask for **all** Your righteousness.

As we boldly approach the throne of Your mercy, may You turn away Your wrath from Your city which You like, and from Your holy mountain which You have chosen and where we offer acceptable sacrifices, so we may be sanctified.

"***Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and His supplications and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate***" (17).

Daniel is asking God to prove His reconciliation by shining His face on them. He did not ask God to allow him to rebuild the temple, which was destroyed, but to shine His face on the sanctuary, for God's house is not built by stones but by His dwelling with them and His satisfaction with His people.

He concludes his prayer by asking God to speedily interfere, not because he deserves it but because of His grace. He did not ask God's mercy for his sake, nor for the sake of Israel, but for the sake of God Himself to glorify His name. Daniel could not

[1] *PL 25:679 A,B.*

present anything to God to justify enjoying His mercies, but saw God the Lover who bountifully gives everyone.

- All His mercy (16), for God's mercy is great (18). and abundant which forgives all our iniquities.
- ***"For the sake of the city of God, His holy mountain"*** (16), which became a reproach because of our sins. Here, the feelings of Daniel are clearly evident in a way that shows how bitter he was because he was deprived of the city of God and the holy sanctuary.
- "***For the Lord's sake***" (17), that is for the sake of God Himself.
- "***For His name***," which was called on the people and on the city.

"***O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name***" (18-19).

Daniel does not ask God to hear him and see the desolation, but rather to incline His ear and to open His eyes and see. When we sin we feel as though God is ignoring us, that He shuts His ears so that He does not hear us and closes His eyes so that He may not see us. But we implore Him saying: "We need You to cleave to us before You hear and see. We want You to incline Your ear as a kind Father who listens to his young child. Open Your eyes with love so that our souls may rest in You. We want You and only You! May You come close to us for we are in dire need of You."

St. Jerome says, [When He turns His face it seems we are not worth the care of His eyes or ears[1].]

During the time of the captivity, the people felt as though God has forsaken them, and that He does not hear them. Here, Daniel asks God for His mercies and His immediate forgiveness.

Daniel pleaded with God to forgive His people, like Moses who interceded for his people. He did not justify himself but felt his part of responsibility as a member of the community and that he has an important role to fulfill. The book did not mention any personal sins, which Daniel may have committed, but still he wanted to repent with all the people, for he said, ***"I confess my sin and the sin of my people"* (20**).

Daniel was a man of prayer therefore he enjoyed the following blessings:

1. The Son of Man appeared to him several times: (7: 13; 8: 15; 10: 5-9), when all the nations were longing for one appearance.

2. He was the only one who saw heavenly visions, for he said, "And *I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision*…" (10: 7-8).

3. Daniel enjoyed the company of the archangel Gabriel, who received the command from the Son of Man to interpret to Daniel the mysteries of His first and Second Coming and His act of salvation (8: 16; 9: 21; 11: 1). Also the archangel gave Daniel strength (10: 9).

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[1] *PL 25:680.*

4. Daniel was called "*greatly beloved*" (9: 23; 10: 11,19), to prove that he is the one whom God desires and is pleased with.

3. THE ANSWER OF THE PRAYER

"***Now while I was speaking, 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***" (20).

St. Augustine used to count on this verse in answering the followers of Pelagius and Coelestius who ignored the divine grace and relied mostly on the human strife. **St. Augustine** emphasized that there is not one single righteous person who does not need God's mercies. According to the Holy Bible, Daniel did not commit any sin and Ezekiel witnessed that he was one of the three righteous persons in the world, *Job, Noah and Daniel* (Ezek.14: 14). who supplicated God with a contrite heart to forgive his sins. How about us? The Lord Jesus Christ has taught His disciples to ask for the forgiveness of their sins more than once through the Lord's Prayer. Therefore, whoever thinks that he does not need the forgiveness of his sins has isolated himself from the teachings of the Lord Himself.

St. Jerome said: [Daniel did not only think of the people's sins, but also of his sins, being one of the people. Though he did not commit any personal sins, yet he wanted to win God's forgiveness by his humility[1].]

"***Yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision***." (21-23).

Daniel revealed the surpassing love of God who heard his prayer and accepted his confession of his sins and the sins of the people, and his supplication for the sake of the holy mountain, that is for the city of Jerusalem and all its holy places.

First, Daniel said, "*while I was speaking*" (21), which means that he did not pray only with his heart but also with his lips. He offered his prayers with his spirit as well as with his body that is to reflect what was happening inside him. And the answer came to him as he was praying.

Second, Daniel has not yet finished his prayer, for it is written, "*While I was speaking in prayer*" (21), which mean that God has answered his prayer before he even finished it. It is unexpected that Gabriel told him, "***At the beginning of your supplication the command went out****"* (23), which mean that God answered Daniel's prayer before he had even started it.

Third, God sent him Gabriel very swiftly! God's great concern for Daniel was amazing! For this was the first time that God sent an angel in the form of a man "*the man Gabriel*." Here, God reveals how precious man is in His eyes, to the extent that He sent His angels to serve man, and furthermore the angel carries the features of a man! **St. Jerome** said: " [It was mentioned that the angel flew, but he appeared in a picture of a man[2].]

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[1] *PL 25:680.*
[2] *PL 25:680A.*

Fourth, Archangel Gabriel appeared to Daniel at the evening time of the offering that is at three o'clock in the afternoon. Daniel had been a captive for at least seventy years and therefore he had not seen the evening offering, which the priest used to offer in the temple of the Lord. However, the long years did not make him forget the ritual of the offering and did not deprive him of enjoying the temple of God, whose stones were destroyed! In the palace of Babylon, Daniel used to participate every morning and evening in the worship, which was abandoned in Jerusalem. Hence, man can worship God, even if he is in a prison, and can share with the heavenly church its magnificent worship.

St. Jerome said: ["***at the time of the evening***" in other words referring specifically to the evening offering is to state that Daniel's prayer was extended from the time of the morning offering until the evening offering, that is why God was merciful to him[1].]

The appearance of the archangel Gabriel at the time of the evening offering has a symbolic meaning. The fullness of time has come, not by the end of the seventy years of captivity but when the time of sin has ended by the coming of the Savior who touches us by His incarnation and lifts us to the new heavenly knowledge.

Fifth, Archangel Gabriel revealed to Daniel his position before God, for he told him, "*You are greatly beloved*" (23). In Hebrew language, those words mean the one whom God likes, who is the subject of God's pleasure. God the Lover of mankind loves those who have a deep fellowship with Him, and He reveals His divine mysteries to them.

Sixth, God gave Daniel a divine commandment, moreover a divine gift, which is the gift of understanding. "***Consider the matter and understand the vision***" (23). Daniel has studied the prophecies of Jeremiah and understood the history of the return from the captivity, but he wanted a better understanding when his heart was absorbed not in his return to Canaan but to heaven itself through the work of the Messiah.

4. THE VISION OF THE SEVENTY WEEKS

Introduction

This vision has a significant importance to the Jews as well as to the Christians. Both have agreed that in this vision the day refers to a year, and a week to seven years as stated in the book of Leviticus. "*And you shall count seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years*" (Lev. 25:8).

St. Jerome said that the Jews who preceded that age have admitted, in humility, that no one can understand this expression except by the coming of the Messiah. However, many see that God's punishment will befall the Jews even after their return from the captivity. In their opinion, the beginning of the seventy weeks is the destruction of the temple and ends by the desolation of the temple during the time of Titus. However, in spite of the difference of opinions, all agree that the focus of the vision is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

First: The purpose of the vision

"***Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation of iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most***

[1] *PL 25:680A.*

Holy" (24).

This period (70 weeks) was determined to accomplish a certain goal with six results, three of them are negative and three are positive. They were all fulfilled by the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"To finish the transgression" - means to erase sins from the eyes of God, by preaching the Gospel of salvation and enjoying the gift of the Holy Spirit, which God granted to His Church through the merit of the precious blood. The captivity was considered a chastisement for the sins of Israel and Judah. However, it was not a just punishment because captivity cannot wash away sins, therefore, the sacrifice on the cross was a must, where the Lord Jesus offers Himself on the cross as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2: 1).

*"**To make an end of sins**"* – is when our Lord Jesus Christ, who is without blemish, offered Himself as a Sacrifice for ending the sins of the whole world.

*"**To make reconciliation of iniquity**"* - means that the sacrifice for reconciliation or atonement has to be offered.

Those were the negative results where the curse of sin was abolished. Sin created enmity between God and us, thus we needed to be reconciled with Him. Now the three positive results are:

*"**To bring in everlasting righteousness**"* - means give perpetual peace, which the Messiah grants as a free gift. He offers Himself for justification, so He justifies us.

St. Athanasius the Apostolic comments on Daniel's prophecy by saying: [This was the reason for all the prophecies, that is the true Righteous One comes who becomes a ransom for the sins of all[1].] St. Paul said, "…*who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption*" (1 Cor.1: 30). Montgomery, who conveyed the opinion of the critics who interpreted this vision, reported that Haddershan said, "*the everlasting righteousness is Messiah the King*."

*"**To seal up vision and prophecy**"* - means the prophecies and the symbols of the Old Testament were fulfilled with the advent of the Messiah, His redemption, and His eternal glory. Daniel has enjoyed seeing the visions, but the time will come when there won't be any need for visions and prophecies, when the Word of God Himself will dwell among us and talk to us in person.

Pope Athanasius said that when the Lord Jesus will come there would be no need for prophesies and visions. [With the first advent of the Lord Christ all prophecies and visions ceased.

This is an irrevocable proof of the coming of the Word since there are no more prophecies and no more visions. Naturally since the One referred to by all this came, then there is no need to make reference to. When the truth comes, why do we need the shadow then?

The kings were anointed from among the people until the Holiest of all came. Jacob prophesied about the kingdom of Judah saying, "*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people*" (Gen 49: 10). The Savior cried saying, "*For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John*" (Matt 11: 13, Luke 16: 16). If there were among the Jews any king or prophet or vision, then they would have denied that the Lord Christ has

[1] *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei, 40:2.*

come[1].]

"***To anoint the Most Holy***" means that our Lord Jesus Christ has sanctified Himself for us, offering Himself as the unique Sacrifice which intercedes on our behalf. As the Lord Jesus said in His final prayer, "*And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth*" (John 17: 19). His only goal is to lead every soul to the eternal glory in order to enjoy the heavenly inheritance. In another translation, it is mentioned that the holy of holiest was anointed, that is, the place full of holiness, or the most holy place in the temple.

St. Jerome noticed that God told Daniel, "***Your people, your holy city***," and did not say "My people and my holy city," because God has separated from His people and rejected His city due to their transgressions. By the same token, God talked to Moses when the people persisted to live in sin. Here, God reveals to Daniel who loves the Jewish people and the city of Jerusalem that the Lord Christ will come and achieve salvation. He will come to His own people but His own people will not believe in Him, therefore they will be rejected and become like a city under chastening!

Second: The three stages of the seventy weeks

"***Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured on the desolate***" (25-27).

God has determined a specific time for the coming of the Word of God, the Word Incarnate. In great wisdom, He has determined the hour in which the Messiah would be born and the moment in which He will offer His life as a Sacrifice for the sins of the world. In God's eyes, the coming of the Lord and His redemption are the center of the history and the backbone of the divine care and the crown of grace. Nothing is done haphazardly, but everything is done in great accuracy and according to God's providence. The Holy Bible has ascertained the coming of the Savior in the fullness of time and at the end of ages.

This prophecy came as a shining star among the miseries of the captives who suffered from the darkness of bitter agony. Many understood the prophecy, so that when He came, the Jews were expecting the Messiah. Many saintly men and women diligently studied the prophecies and were waiting for the coming of the Savior. Simeon the elder was waiting for the consolation of Israel. Anna and others were waiting for the salvation of Israel. Also, the Samaritans were waiting for the coming of the Lord, as the Samaritan woman said, "*I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ. When He comes, He will tell us all things*" (John 4: 25). Even the Gentiles were expecting His coming for the wise men who saw the star, were expecting a King and a Savior[2].

Tertullian presented in his article, "An answer to the Jews" a whole chapter about

[1] *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei, 40:1-4.*
[2] *Bethany Parallel Commentary on the O.T., p.1798; The Treasury of the Old Testament.*

how this prophecy about the birth of the Lord Christ, His suffering and the desolation of Jerusalem was fulfilled.

- Daniel has determined the exact date of the coming of the Savior by saying "***Seventy weeks are determined***…." Probably the critics could find excuses in other prophecies or say that what is written is about the future, but what can they say about this prophecy? It refers to Christ and declares that the anointed one is not only a man but also the Most Holy, and that Jerusalem would stay until His coming, then prophecies and visions will cease in Israel[1]

St. Athanasius the Apostolic

Bishop Dioscorus commented on this chapter by saying that due to the precision in this chapter in determining the time of the crucifixion of the Lord Christ, the Jews have replaced the word "to anoint the Most Holy" to "consecrating the holiest of all." This was mentioned in their copy called "*Masoretic*," which dates back to the eleventh century, and the prophecy seems to relate to a place and not a person. Moreover, they added the book of Daniel to the "*Ketopem*" which contains the historical books, the Psalms, the wisdom books, so that the book of Daniel is not counted as one of the prophetic books[2].

Father Bishoy Kamel commented on this prophecy by saying: [These calculations gave the Jews a chance to determine approximately the date of the coming of the Lord Jesus. That is why St. Luke the evangelist wrote, "*…waiting for the consolation of Israel, and …to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem*" (Luke 2: 25, 38). St. Luke wrote, "*…because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately*" (Luke 19: 11). Thus, the Jews have no excuse in determining the date of the coming of the Lord Jesus[3].]

Third: What is the meaning of week?

In Hebrew, the word "week" means "*shabua*" derived from "*seba*," not meaning seven days, but a unit of seven. The plural of the word is "*shabu'im*," and it is not the feminine plural but it means periods of seven[4]. The Jewish and Christian interpreters have agreed in their explanation that "seventy weeks" mean seventy units of seven; most probably it starts from the year 457 or 455 B.C until the year between 26 and 70 A.D.

Fourth: The special decrees of the return to Jerusalem and the restoration of the building of the temple

Three decrees were issued for the return to Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple:

Cyrus issued first decree in the year 538 B.C. or 537 B.C. after conquering Babylon (Is 44: 8; Ezra 1: 1-2, 2; Chron 36: 22-23). The first return was under the leadership of Zorobabel, the restoration of the altar and the reorganization of the worship had started, but the enemies had attacked them. During the era of Darius the First, the king ordered the continuation of building the temple, but did not issue a decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Daniel said that there was a difference between the two decrees of renewing the temple and renewing Jerusalem. King Cyrus did not mind helping the Jews to build the temple; however, he felt that helping them to build the city of Jerusalem represented a great risk for him. Building the temple was considered the end of the period

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[1] *De Incarnatione Verbi Dei, 39:1-3.*

[2] *Bethany, p. 1764.*

[3] دانيال صديق الملائكة، ص 67.

[4] *J. Barton Payne: Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy, p.383.*

of captivity, which was 70 years. It was mentioned in the book of Ezra that "*Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem*" (Ezra 1: 2-3). Ezra, the priest, did not mention anything here regarding the renewing of the city of Jerusalem and its construction.

Second Decree: King Artaxerxes I (464 B.C. to 424 B.C.) issued that decree in the year 457 B.C. and Ezra the priest carried it (Ezra 8) about 80 years after their first return. The decree allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem (Ezra 7: 13) to organize the Law, to apply the Law of Moses (Ezra 7: 7), and to arrange the financial matters pertaining to the Temple (Ezra 7: 15,20). Ezra's concern was to build the people spiritually and ethically (7: 9). He was granted the right to rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. He said, "*For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem*" (Ezra 9: 9). Unfortunately, the history did not tell us any of the renewals in the construction, however it was obvious that Ezra did the spiritual renewal but could not build the walls nor renew the city. "*The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down and its gates are burned with fire*" (Neh 1: 3). Nehemiah did not expect that the condition of Jerusalem was that bad; probably he expected that Ezra and his companions had renewed the city and built its walls[1].

Third Decree: Artaxerxes I issued the third decree in the twentieth year of his reign during the month of Nisan (March/April 445 B.C.). Nehemiah the cupbearer of the king carried it (Neh 1: 11). Nehemiah built the walls of Jerusalem and the city, for he said, "*If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it*" (Neh 2: 5).

Fifth: The accounts of the three stages

With faith, Daniel had asked God to fulfill His promise, which is the return of His people after the seventy years of captivity. However, God gave him a much greater promise, which was fulfilled not after 70 years but after 70 x 7 = 490 years to allow him, and all the human race, enjoy a new Sabbath and a complete rest in God's righteousness. The fathers and the prophets desired the return of the human race to God through God's salvation, through the incarnation of the Word who offered Himself as a propitiation for the sins of the world. God determined the time for the coming of the Savior, His crucifixion, as well as the events of His Second Advent.

- It is obvious that this expression talks about the coming of the Lord who will reveal Himself after seventy weeks. During the time of the Savior on earth, sins were erased through the propitiation. Eternal righteousness was preached which differs from the righteousness of the Law. Visions and prophecies had ceased until the coming of John and the Most Holy was anointed. Before the coming of the Savior, they were hoping for all these matters. The angel teaches us that the beginning of the numbers, that is the seventy weeks, which is equivalent to 490 years, starts with the decree of building

[1] *Gleson L. Archer: Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, p. 290.*

Jerusalem as an answer to the request of the captives. This happened in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, the king of Persia. Nehemiah had asked him and the answer was that he had to build Jerusalem in the year 115 of the Persian Empire, the forth year of the Olympics 83, and the twentieth year of reign of King Artaxerxes. Up until that date when it was he second year of the Olympics 202, and the year 16 when King Tiberius Caesar was in reign (when the Lord Jesus was crucified), the count is 475 years, which is equivalent to 490 years according to the Jewish calculation, where they calculate the year based on the rotation of the moon. To them, the year counts 354 days, while the solar year counts 365 days and a quarter. The solar year has eleven and a quarter day more than the lunar year, according to the rotation of the moon[1]]

Fr. Julius Afrikanos

[The period between the forth year of the Olympics 83 and the second year of the Olympics 202 is 475 solar years, as the Olympics is practiced every 4 years. This period is equivalent to 490 years according to the Jewish calculation.]

In his interpretation of this vision, **St. Jerome** mentioned to the explanation of **Julius Africanus.**

The period was divided into three parts

First: Seven weeks: that is, 7 x 7 = 49 years, which is the period between issuing the decree to rebuild the temple and the wall by command of Artaxerxes I on Nissan 14 in the year 445 B.C., and appointing Nehemiah a governor for Jerusalem. This period ended in the year 397 or 396 B.C., when Nehemiah died during the days of Malachi the prophet. The seven weeks (equivalent to 49 years). is the duration of rebuilding Jerusalem. No doubt that Nehemiah had spent this period in building Jerusalem. Nehemiah was appointed a governor of Judea, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem took place during his second appointment as a governor. At the first appointment, he remained governor over Judea for 12 years. During the thirty-second year, Nehemiah returned to king Artaxerxes and asked him the permission to return to Jerusalem. (Neh 13: 6-7). The king gave him the permission and then after issuing the decree to rebuild Jerusalem he appointed Nehemiah governor over Jerusalem. When Nehemiah started rebuilding Jerusalem he was 30 years old and he spent 49 years in its construction, thus he was 79 years when the job was completed as stated by the historian Josephus.

Some historians say that the temple was built in 49 years as follows: Cyrus gave permission to build the temple. The foundations were laid in three years, when Cyrus went to war in Scythis. But the Jews had to stop building during the time of his successor Cambyses who was against them. Forty-six years later they were given permission to continue the construction. Thus, the period (3 + 46 years = 49 years) was the period of rebuilding Jerusalem and rebuilding the Jewish people too, whether religiously or secularly, through Ezra and Nehemiah[2].

Second: 62 weeks (62 x 7 = 434 years) which represent four centuries of darkest periods for the people spiritually since there were no prophets until the coming of John the Baptist. Thus they were sitting in the darkness until the Sun of righteousness shone above them by His cross.

❖ After the return of the people under the leadership of Joshua, Ezra and Zorobabel, and

[1] *Cf. A N Frs, vol. 6, p.134-35.*
[2] *Bethany parallel Commentary on the O.T., p.1799.*

the rebuilding of Jerusalem, there are 434 years until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Who is the One to forgive our sins? St. Paul said, "*For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one…*" (Eph 2: 14). "*Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us.…*" (Col 2: 14). There are 434 years between the return of the people from Babylon (the rebuilding of Jerusalem) and the birth of the Lord Christ[1].

St. Hippolytus of Rome

During this time, two important events happened

First: The appearance of Antiochus Epiphanes (167–164 B.C.) who is the Antichrist of the Old Testament. He stopped the offering of the permanent sacrifice for three and a half years. He ordained Greek priests, who worshipped Greek gods, defiled the temple with the blood of the pig, and murdered thousands of Jews. However, the Maccabees attacked him until the temple was liberated and the sacrifice was returned.

Second: During the Roman Empire, when Herod the Great reigned and wanted to win the approval of the Jews, he started building the new temple around the year 20 B.C., and expanded the area on which the temple was built. It took about 46 years to finish the work.

In verse 27, it was mentioned that in the middle of the week the animal sacrifice was abolished, that is in the middle of the last week of the 69th week. It means that the crucifixion will be accomplished in the week number 68.5, that is, (68.5 x 7) which happen to be 479 years after the issuing of the decree of rebuilding the temple by Nehemiah (year 445 B.C.). Thus, crucifixion should be 33 and half years after the birth of Christ and this was fulfilled, for we know that the Lord was crucified at that age. The end of the last week was 35 years apart from the crucifixion that is around year 70 A.D., when the temple was completely destroyed by the hands of Titus the Roman.

Some historians see it this way that the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ came 483 years (7 + 62 = 69 × 7 = 483) after issuing the decree of Artaxerxes, for the crucifixion was fulfilled in April 30 A.D. Since the decree was issued in the year 445 B.C., then the total is 445 + 30 = 475 years and not 483 years, the difference is eight years. The explanation for the difference of the 8 years is that the year in the Holy Bible is based on 360 days and not 365 days and a quarter. The five and a quarter day make the difference of the 8 years. Thus the coming of the Messiah is 69 weeks later (69 × 7 = 483 years) exactly according to what was mentioned in the Holy Bible[2].

Gleason L. Archer sees that the sixty-nine years (483 years) are symbolic. He base his calculation on the second decree, or the first one according to King Artaxerxes, in the year 457 B.C., which Ezra carried for the construction. But the construction was not accomplished until Nehemiah. So if we subtract 483 from 457, the difference is 26. Since there is no year that is equal to zero, then the number 1 is added to 26, to make it 27 years A.D. Since the Lord Christ was crucified in the year 30 A.D., then He would have started His ministry and baptism on the year 27 A.D., thus the prophecy was accurately being fulfilled.

Others see that the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes is the year 454 B.C. according to the scholars Hengestenberg and Asher. If we subtract this year from the year 483 A.D. (69 weeks x 7), the period, which Daniel had spoken about in verse 25, the

[1] *Cf. AN Frs., vol. 5, p. 180-1*
[2] *Clarence Larkin: The Book of Revelation, 1919, p. 52.*

result is year 29 A.D., which is the year of the beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. The most important point in the history of kings and rulers is the beginning of their reign and not their birth that is why Daniel heeded that point.

Many see that the second period ends by the baptism of the Lord Jesus and the beginning of His ministry. Then the third period starts when the Lord Jesus offers Himself a Sacrifice in the middle of the week, three and a half years after He started the ministry, thus abolishing all the animal sacrifices.

Third: The seventieth week or the last week: "***Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering***" (27).

One opinion or reflection about this verse is that the week referred to is the Holy Week, with its seven days starting on the triumphal entry of the Lord to the temple on Sunday (tenth day of the month of Nissan) as a Lamb. Then He stayed in Bethany until the fourteenth day (Thursday) when He celebrated the last Passover with His disciples. It was at the Last Supper that He offered the sacrifice of the New Testament made of bread and wine transformed into His Body and His Blood, as the offering of Melchzedek, according to David's prophecy in the Psalm. Thus the first five days refer to approximately five thousand years of animal sacrifice offerings in preparation to and symbol of His own sacrifice. Then the last two days of the week refer to two thousand years, which ring a bell with what St. Peter had written about the Second Coming. "*Do not forget this one thing that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance*" (2 Pet 3: 8-9).

Some people see that the sixty-ninth week has ended when the Lord Jesus offered Himself as the unique Sacrifice of love. Now, Daniel's vision bring us back to the end of the world, which is the period of the seven last years. The Antichrist will then come to rule for three and a half years and the great tribulation will materialize. The Lord Jesus taught us about the great tribulation saying, "*Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation', spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house…For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened*" (Matt 24: 15-22). Then He talked about His Second Advent.

Daniel made reference to the same subject matter in another place, "*And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time…*" (Dan.12: 1). Also in the book of Jeremiah, it was mentioned, "*Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it*" (Jer 30: 7). Also in the book of Zephaniah it was written, "*Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy…*" (Zeph 1: 18). In the book of Revelation, "*…These are the ones who came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*" (Rev 7: 14). Description of this great tribulation was also mentioned in the following references: Rev 6: 15; 11: 1-14;

12: 6-17).

❖ He stretched His hands meaning that He stretched His sufferings. Mentioning a time and two times and a half made reference to the three and a half years (1290 days). of the ruling of the Antichrist, which Daniel had prophesied about[1].

St. Hippolytus of Rome

[1] *Cf. AN Frs., vol. 5, p. 185.*

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (9)

YOU GRANT ME MORE THAN I ASK
AND YOU GIVE ME MORE THAN I NEED!

❖ In humility, Daniel felt that he does not deserve Your promises,
Therefore He prayed in sackcloth and ashes.
He confessed his sins and the sins of his people.
He wanted You to fulfill the promise of returning after seventy years!

❖ You have justly chastened Your people in the Babylonian captivity.
During the chastisement, You watched over Your people
And everything that befell them was by Your permission.
You like to chastise them, then glorify them!

❖ He entreated You, for the sins of the people have hid Your presence.
He supplicated You to incline Your ear and listen,
to open Your eyes and see the shame that befell Your people.
Please forgive their sins for the sake of Your name,
for the sake of Your temple and Your city!

❖ Since the destruction of the temple, the offering of sacrifices have ceased.
However, when the time came to offer a sacrifice,
Daniel offered himself as a sacrifice of love crying to You,
O the full of mercy.
You sent him the Archangel Gabriel to grant him understanding.
He told him that he is greatly beloved by You,
And he interpreted the vision to him.
With the old promise of freedom from captivity after seventy years,
You gave him a new promise on the Sabbath of these seventy years.
You showed him how the world should be free from the captivity of sin,
And how the believers should not commit sin
But enjoy righteousness and fulfillment of the prophecies about the coming of the Most Holy.

❖ You determined the time of the Incarnation and its purpose and revealed them to Daniel.
You declared to him the mystery of the cross and the unique Sacrifice.
You revealed to him the end of times and the enjoyment of the eternal glories!
Truly, You grant me more than I ask and give me more than I need!

ANNEX
CHAPTER NINE[1]

OPINIONS REGARDING THE 70 WEEKS

St. Jerome provided us with various opinions of the Fathers of the Church and the Jewish scholars regarding the vision of the 70 weeks, even if it is different in the way of calculating it but it mainly concentrates all around the Person of Jesus Christ and His redeeming work.

He commenced with the opinion of **Fr. Julius Africanios**, we have previously presented. He introduced to us afterwards a group of different opinions for **Eusebius of Caesarea**, which are mentioned in his eighth bookwork "Evangelic Preparation" "*Praeparatio Evangelica*," which we will mention briefly here:

1. THE FIRST VIEW

This opinion is based on the assumption that Jesus Christ, the High Priest, is the center of the vision, that is why the calculations arises through the successive high priests of the Israelites since their return from Babylon till the arrival of the Savior who is anointed for our sake.

[I do not think that the division of the seventy weeks aroused hypothetically... let us think of the other (anointed ones) who took care of the Jewish people, and who succeeded this prophecy and the return from Babylon, i.e. the high priests *"arkiereis"* that the Bible calls them anointed ones. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak (Ezra 3: 2; 4: 3 who was also called Joshua Zech 3: 1,3) who was followed by several successors who occupied this position until the coming of our Lord and Savior... which means here that the total of the seven weeks till the 62 weeks become (69× 7) 483 years after the time of Cyrus, or it will be said that we used our guessing to calculate those who occupied this position as anointed priests looking after the people since Joshua the son of Jozadak till the coming of the Lord, i.e. who were anointed as priests (we'll mention this in details)...]

- **Joshua the son of Jozadak** the high priest, who together with Zorobabel Ben Shealtiel put the foundation of the temple and the construction, was accomplished in 49 years, as it was delayed due to the Samaritans and other Gentiles surrounding them. These 7 weeks (49) have separated from the 62 weeks as in the prophecy. The Jews have finally approved this opinion as they said to the Lord, as mentioned in the Gospel story, "Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and will you rear it up in three days?" (John 2: 20)… Josephus adds three more years the main works related to the building preparations etc. Thus the total comes to 49 years calculated from the seventh year of Darius. During this time **Joshua the son of Jozadak and Zorobabel** were looking after the people (which reached its maximum), and Zechariah and Haggai were telling their prophecies.
- Then Ezra and Nehemiah came from Babylon and built the walls of the city during the priesthood of **Joiakim the son of Jeshua** (Neh 12: 10) named Jozadak (Jehozadak), who was succeeded by **Elishahib**, then **Jonathan and Joiada,** afterwards **Jaddua** (Neh 12: 10) who during his era Alexander, the king of the Macedonia built

[1] ***Translated by Nagwa Salib, Ottawa, Canada.***

Alexandria, as mentioned by Josephus in his book *Antiquities*, He came to Jerusalem and offered sacrifices in the temple. Alexander died during the 113 Olympics in the year 236 of the Persian Empire, which started in its turn the first year of the 55 Olympics. This date came matching the time when Cyrus the king of Persia conquered the Babylonians and Chaldeans.

- After the death of Jaddua the Priest who was responsible for the temple during reign of Alexander, **Onias** took over the high priesthood. During this time Seleucus appointed himself as king on Syria and Asia after conquering Babylon in the 12th year following the death of Alexander. Until this time the total of the years passed since Cyrus the king are 248 years, complying with the date of the Book of Maccabees.
- Succeeding Onias the high priest came **Eleazar** (Avaran) heading the priesthood for the Jews. During this time the seventy elders have translated the Holy Bible to the Greek language (Septuagint) in the city of Alexandria.
- After this came **Onias the Second** them **Simon** who lead the people, Joshua the son of Sirach wrote, the Greek title *Panartos* (the honorable and perfect man) whom lots of people have related to Solomon by mistake. Antiochus during this time tried to obligate the Jews by submitting offerings the gods of the Gentiles. **Judas Maccabaeus** succeeded Onias, who cleaned the temple by destroying the idols of the Gentiles. His brother **Jonathan**, then his brother **Simon** (Thassi) to rule the people, succeeded him. By his death 277 years have passed by the reign of the Syrian Empire. The Maccabees has recorded the incidents happened during this time, leading to the end of the First Maccabees and the death of Simon the high priest in the year 425.
- **Johannes Hyrcanus** took over the high priesthood afterwards for 29 years, after his death **Aristobulus the First** ruled the people for one year, and he was the first one to have the honor of the high priesthood together with the power of ruling the kingdom after the return from the Babylon captivity.
- His successor was **Alexander Jannaeus** who combined being the high priest and king. He ruled the people for 27 years. At this point the total number of years from the first year of Cyrus and the return of the people to Judea from the captivity is 483 years. This total sums the 7 weeks with the 62 weeks making 69 weeks in total. During this duration the high priests ruled the Jews and the people considered them as the anointed ones.

After the death of their last one, Alexander Jannaeus, the Jews were divided into different parties, and internal revolt was among them as they were without a leader. This lead Alexandra, the wife of Alexander who was named Salina (Salome) to overrule, and keep the post of high priest for her son **Hyrcanus the Second** but the kingdom was passed to her youngest son Aristobulus the Second who ruled the kingdom for 10 years. The two brothers started fighting and declared national wars and the Jews were divided into parties. Then Graeus Pompey the General of the Roman army came into the picture. He invaded Jerusalem and reached the Holy of Holies in the Temple and sent his brother Aristobulus the Second chained to Rome to humiliate him while he is in his victorious procession. He gave his brother **Hyrcanus the Second** the high priesthood. The Jewish nation became for the first time ruled by the Roman Empire. Herod the son of Intibater followed him in taking over the reign over the Jews with a decree from the Roman Senate

after the assassination of Hyrcanus, thus becoming the first foreigner to rule the Jews. Following the death of his parents he gave the high priesthood to his children although they weren't from the tribe of Levi, neglecting the Law of Moses. He gave them this position in accordance to their promise to provide him with bribes and special benefits, as he despised God's Law[1].

2. THE SECOND VIEW

St. Jerome presents us with another explanation for the **Eusebius of Caesarea**, he states that the number of years since the sixth year of Darius' rule who followed Cyrus and his son Cambyses this timing coincides the timing in which the temple building was completed, till the time of Herod and Augustus Caesar, this duration resembles the 7 weeks in addition of 62 weeks and its total 483 years. In this time Hyrcanus was assassinated becoming the last priest to the Maccabees through Herod ending the priesthood according to the Law. In this time a Roman leader destroyed the city and the temple. Maybe by Herod himself who declared himself a ruler illegally. According the angel's saying: "**And He emphasis his promise with many in one week, and in the middle of the week**..." we recognize the following:

Jesus Christ was born during the rule of Herod in Judea and Augustus Caesar in Rome, He preached with the Gospel and constructed the worship of the true God for many, meaning undutifully the apostles and the believers in general and following the sufferings of the Lord the offerings in the middle of the week were stopped because whatever was offered afterwards did not have any value in front of God... As all cried: "His blood be on us and our children" (Matth 2;25), and also "we do not have a king except Caesar".

Eusebius has mentioned this in his book *Chronicle*, but for calculating the years since the accomplishing of the temple till the tenth year of the reign of the Emperor Augustus Caesar, i.e. when Hyrcanus was sleighed and Herod took over the Jewish nation, in its total 7 + 62 weeks (7×69) or 483 years presented as follows:

The building of the temple was accomplished during the 67 Olympics, which is the sixth year of Darius. In the third year of the Olympics 186, i.e. the tenth for Augustus, Herod ruled the Jews. Thus calculating this duration as 483 years according to the Olympics as it is completed every 4 years.

[There are 120 Olympics within 186, 67. (120 × 4 = 480 + 3 (the third year after the Olympics) = 483)].

3. THE THIRD VIEW

St. Jerome states that Eusebius has another opinion which he does not totally reject, which is evaluating the last week of the years as equal to 70 years considering that each day is equal 10 years of age.

In the midst of the week, approximately 35 AC, Jesus' Sacrifice happened, and 35 years later (year 70) Rome arose against the Jews and destroyed the temple by Titus the Roman.

ST. HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME VIEW

We have previously discussed this in the Chapter's explanation. He sees that the

[1] *PL 25:684 - 686B.*

last week represents the end of the world, when the Antichrist will appear and Elijah the prophet will appear to declare God's knowledge. Finally, Jesus Christ will come and kill the hypocrite with a blow of His mouth and will destroy his kingdom.

APPOLINARIOUS VIEW

He saw that with The Lord Jesus' birth and his salvation work the seven weeks have completed (49 years), if we add to it the 62 weeks (434 years), i.e. in the year 482 the reconstruction of the temple and Jerusalem... when Elijah will appear reviving the hearts of the parents of their children, thus the Antichrist will come according to the apostle that he will sit in the Lord's Temple (2 Thess 2) and arises a war against the saints, then he will be killed with the blow of our Lord and Savior. This will happen in the mid of the week fixing the oath of the Lord with His saints, after a decree is presented by the Antichrist forbidding the offerings as abomination will occur, that is a statue of an idol will be placed in the temple. And the final destruction will occur and the Jews who will believe the Antichrist after rejecting Jesus Christ will be condemned.

Appolinarious gets witness of **Julius Aficanios's** book the *Tempora* whom we have previously presented his view in the Chapter's explanation.

He emphasizes that the last week follows the end of the world, but **Appolinarious** says that it is impossible to separate the duration among each other, but it is stuck following each other.

ST. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIAVIEW

Considered that the successive periods and that the seventy weeks were, from the reign of Cyrus king of Persia even took Vcepcian Titus and the Roman government, it includes the age of Persia, Greece and the Emperors of Rome.

ORIGEN'S POINT OF VIEW

Although he follows the symbolic interpretation, but we find him in this vision not appealing to symbolism but attached to the historic facts. He presented us with the following brief notice in the tenth binder of the *Stromata* division.

[We must find thoroughly the duration between the first year for Darius the son of Ahasuerus and the second coming of Jesus Christ, and discover how many years it includes, and the facts which was said have happened during this time; then we find out if these timings coincides with the second coming or not].

TERTULLIAN VIEW

St. Jerome presented to us the opinion of **Tertullian**[1] mentioned in his book "Against the Jews" *Contra Judaeos,* briefly.

How can we say that Jesus Christ came during the 62 weeks? We start calculating this since the first year of Darius, as it coincides with Daniel's vision. That is why it is said He informed me, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications the commandment came forth" (22, 23).

Darius ruled for 19 years, and Artaxerxes 40 years, but Ochus named Cyrus ruled for 24 years and Argus one year then Darius called Melas for 21 years. Alexander the Macedonian ruled for 12 years, Soter in Alexandria for 35 years, the successor of Philadelphius for 38 years. Euergetes ruled for 25 years, the Philopatir for 17 years,

[1] *PL 25:691 - 694.*

followed by Epiphanes for 24 years, and Euergetes the Second for 29 years and Soter 38 years, Ptolemy for 37 years and Cleopatra for 20 years and 5 months. Also, Cleopatra shared with Augustus the empire for 13 years. Augustus then ruled after Cleopatra for another 43 years, thus the total years of Augustus ruling 56 years. Augustus then lived after the birth of Jesus Christ for 15 years.

The sum of the years till the birth of Jesus Christ (the 41 year of Augustus' reign) 13 years shared by Cleopatra, 28 years alone (the birth of the Lord in the year 29 of his reign), making 437 years and 5 months, i.e. 62.5 weeks passed, which is equal to 437 years and 6 months upon the birth of Jesus Christ. The eternal ratification then appeared, and anointed the Holy of the Holies who is Jesus Christ, and the vision and prophesies where ended and Jesus omitted sin for all who believes in Him. But what does it mean that the visions and prophecies were justified? **Tertullian** says that the prophecies have ended, justifying that all the prophecies were completed, completing all the prophecies, which have been previously.

Surely all prophesies and visions for the coming of Jesus and His sufferings are not valid anymore due to the fact that it is already achieved.

Tertullian adds here: Let us search for the meaning of the 7 1/2 weeks that was in turn divided to parts of previous weeks, how it was achieved among these parts? After the death of Augustus who lived after the birth of Jesus, 15 years passed, and was followed by Tiberius Caesar who ruled for 22 years and 7 months and 28 days. In the 15th year of his reign, Jesus suffered when he was 33 years old. Then Caligula Caesar ruled for 3 years and 8 months and 13 days. Nero ruled for 9 years and 9 months and 13 days. Galba followed for 7 months and 28 days and Otho for 3 months and 5 days; Vitellius has ruled for 8 months and 28 days. Vesbesian conquered the Jews in the first year of his reign, thus the total years became 52 years and 6 months, for he ruled for 11 years and this during the time Jerusalem was invaded, thus the Jews have completed the 70 weeks as in Daniel's prophecy.

THE JEWS VIEW

St. Jerome[1] says that the Jews counted the 490 years starting from the 1st year of Darius who sleighed Belteshazzar and converted the Chaldean Empire to Medes and Persia, ending till the era of Jesus Christ. They found a prophecy about His death in it and about the attack of the Roman army under the lead of Vesbesian and Titus his son. And the prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem by the hand of the Romans, the Jews have considered the first 3 1/2 years from the week signifies its destruction on Vespesian hands and Titus and the other 3 1/2 years points to Hadrian's war.

James Montgomery[2] who adopted the ideas of the critics of the 20th century has mentioned that several of the Jewish scholars in the Middle Ages followed the traditional vision considering the final point in the prophecy, the destruction of Jerusalem through Titus or Hadrian; like Rashi, and the son of Ezra etc.

It is said on behalf of Shottgen examples for the Jews' views of this prophecy, as Nachmanides said that the Holy of the Holies is not except the Messiah, devoted through David's sons.

And the rabbi Moses Hadershan says, "the eternal righteousness is Messiah the King".

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[1] *PL 25, 694 - 695.*

[2] *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel, p. 392.*

To add more interpretations for this prophecy of the Jewish scholars, please refer to the book of Father Abde-Messih Abou-El-Kheir page 136-139.

CHAPTER 10

SEEING
THE GLORY OF GOD

Chapters ten through twelve cover the last of Daniel's visions.

Chapter Ten: **Introduction to the vision** that describes the appearance of the angel or probably the Word of God Himself.

Chapter Eleven: **The vision itself** which presents special prophecies regarding the relationship between the Ptolomies of Egypt and the Seleucusians of Syria, and ends with the death of Antiochus.

Chapter Twelve: The conclusion of the vision that talks about the great tribulation and the end of times.

Daniel presents chapter ten as an introduction to the following two chapters, where he shows the concern of the heavenly creatures for the human world (1 Chron.1: 7, 2: 1; Zech.3: 1; Rev.12: 7). He also presents the conflict between the angels and the evil powers over the salvation or the destruction of the human race. As the angels do not cease to work for the sake of those who will inherit the salvation (Heb 1: 14), likewise the devils do not cease to attack the truth and to perish the souls.

In the previous chapter, he presented to us a special vision of the seventy weeks, which determined the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus to liberate the believers, as well as directed our attention to His Second Advent. Now in this vision, Daniel is confirming the main events starting from the time of the return from Babylon until the advent of the Lord Jesus in precision and full details.

1. The date of the vision	**1**
2. Daniel's enjoyment with the vision	**2-9**
3. The angelic ministry	**10-14**
4. The divine ministry	**15-27**

1. THE DATE OF THE VISION

"In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision" **(1).**

Comparing this verse, "***In the third year of the reign of Cyrus the king of Persia,"*** with the verse in Daniel 1: 21, "*Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus;*" it becomes clear that Daniel had retired at the age of 80, a year after King Cyrus started ruling.

The reason for Daniel to stay in Babylon and not return to Jerusalem with Zorobabel was to fulfill a special mission by God's command to serve his people in the captivity.

Daniel saw this vision two years after he forsook his work before his departure. He had faith in God and believed that what he had seen in the vision will come true (Rev.22: 6), for he said that the message was true. In other words he had no doubts about the message in the vision although some of the events were unexpected. However, Daniel knew that the appointed time was long to come. Some people relate the long time to the fourth vision (ch 10-12), because it extends until the resurrection of the dead and the life

to come[1].

Daniel fully understood this particular vision, although he did not understand the previous vision.

Why did he mention in this verse the name Belteshazzar, the name that was given to him in Babylon? The answer is two parts:

1. To confirm that, in spite of his retirement, no one knew his real name and that he cleaved to the name that was imposed on him, though he disliked it, just in case he could serve his people through it.

2. To prove that he still carries the Chaldean name, yet his heart is constantly attached to his God who reveals His mysteries to him and grants him understanding and wisdom.

2. DANIEL'S ENJOYMENT WITH THE VISION:

***"In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled"* (2-3).**

Daniel fasted for three whole weeks; he did not eat any pleasant food nor did he anoint himself with perfume, for Cyrus was busy with the war against the Scythians. So he left Asia Minor and appointed his son Campyses with a mission to attack the restoration of the temple and the holy city Jerusalem. Truly, some had left Babylon and had gone back to the Promised Land, but they were in shame and reproach for being unable to rebuild the spiritual life in their country. Daniel also may have heard that those returning to Jerusalem were not keen about rebuilding the temple.

In this vision, the week is seven days; however in the previous vision the week is equivalent to seven years.

In the first chapter of this book, we saw Daniel refusing to eat the delicacies of the king and eating only beans. Has he gone back to eating meat and drinking wine? That we don't know? Earlier, he rejected the delicacies of the king, but now he refused any pleasant food, even in his house, to offer an acceptable fasting on behalf of his people.

Those who criticize the fasting in the church pretend that it does not serve any purpose and that there is no need for it except when it is necessary, example in situations similar to what had happened with Daniel the prophet. To refute that, we say that Daniel was a man of prayer and fasting; he prayed and fasted during the tribulation as well as in other times, for he prayed three times daily. Likewise with the church fasting, we need it besides the private fasting when tribulation arises. **But a clear spiritual purpose for the fasting and for all our worship must be identified**.

Daniel refused to eat meat, wine and any pleasant food; likewise in all our fasting, we should not only stop eating meat but we should not eat any food with lust even if it is vegetarian food or some dry bread.

Prayers and confession of sins accompanied Daniel's fasting, for fasting is to prepare one to talk with the Lord and is no goal in itself. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "*This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting*" (Matt 17: 21).

❖ Since Daniel controlled his lust, he was able to control the Chaldean kingdom, so he destroyed their idols, tamed their lions, proclaimed the Incarnation and interpreted the

[1] *Bethany Parallel Commentary on O.T., p. 1802.*

hidden mysteries (5: 9-14) [1].]

St. Basil the Great

❖ What about Daniel? How did he meditate on the wonders? It was only made possible after fasting for 20 days[2].]

St. Basil the Great

***"Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is, the Tigris,"* (4).**

Some interpreters see that Daniel saw himself in the vision by the shore of the River Tigris, although he was not actually there and he never lived in that region before. Others see that after three weeks of fasting, Daniel was walking by the River Tigris reflecting on God's dealings with him like Isaac used to walk in the field.

Ezekiel the prophet saw a great vision by the River Chebar (Ezek.1), and at the Jordan River, the heavens were opened during the baptism of the Lord Jesus. Thus, when we sit by the baptismal water and accept the work of the Holy Spirit inside us and realize how the Lord adopted us, then we are granted a new vision of our inner life and the Son of God reveals Himself to us. We see Him sitting on His throne, granting us the deposit of His heavenly glory until we meet with Him face to face. At that time we will enjoy the fellowship of His glory and His eternal inheritance.

Instead of feasting, Daniel was grieving and fasting. He did not eat any meat nor drink any wine, did not even anoint himself with any perfume as was the custom of the Persians. This vision appeared to him while he was grieving for the sins of his people.

Cyrus had allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem, but few have accepted that, for many wanted to stay in Babylon because of their business and their material gain instead of starting new projects in the Promised Land. This situation made Daniel very sad, who stayed in the captivity not for any material gain but for serving those who did not return to Jerusalem. What saddened him more was the negligence of those who returned to Jerusalem to build the temple of the Lord and instead cared only for building their houses. This also saddened Haggai the prophet and he told the people, "*Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins*?" (Hagg.1: 4).

This vision was on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, that is, on the feast of the unleavened bread (Exod.12: 18), which is served for a whole week directly after the Passover.

"I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose ***waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude"* (5-6).**

Some interpreters see that the word "*Uphaz*" means pure, while others see that it refers to a special region as was mentioned in the book of Jeremiah "*gold from Uphaz*" (Jer.10: 9). Some translated it as "*Ophir*."

Some thinkers see that the linen clothes refer to the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, and that the golden girdle refers to the ministry of the Lord Jesus. In the Eastern countries, people used to wear girdles on the waist because their clothes were too long reaching their feet, which stumbled their movements. Therefore, the purpose of the girdle

[1] *On Renunciation of the World.*
[2] *The long Rules, Q. 16.*

is to hold the clothes up and help smoother movements.

"***His body was like beryl.***" **St. Jerome** said that the beryl is one of the twelve precious stones, which are laid on the chest of the high priest[1]. The precious stones refer to the twelve tribes and the high priest intercedes for them and carries them, with love, on his chest to enjoy His divine presence. Now if we are one tribe, the tribe of Judah (spiritually) and if we are members of His body, then we have the right to enter the heavenly holies with the Heavenly Head.

His voice was like the voice of a great multitude, which Daniel heard and understood, while the others sitting with him did not understand and ran away. This is exactly what happened with Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus when he saw and heard the Lord Jesus, while the others accompanying him could not see or understand anything. (Acts 9:7; 22:7)

Daniel saw in the vision the exact description of what St. John saw in the Revelation (Rev. 1:13-15). Some people think that Daniel saw an angel, while others think that he saw the Word of God before the incarnation[2]. Since Daniel was weeping for the sins of his people, we believe that He who carried the sins of the world appeared to him.

- Daniel said, "***I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen***" (5). In the previous vision, it is written, "*Look, Angel Gabriel was sent*," however in this vision things are different for Daniel sees the Lord, not as a perfect man but in a form of a man. The different colors of His clothes are symbol of the different gifts, which we are called to. The priesthood clothes were made of different colors, for many Gentiles were waiting for the coming of the Lord Christ, so we may become one body with different talents.

His waist was girded with gold of Uphaz (5). The word "*Uphaz*" was translated from Hebrew to Greek and it means pure gold. He was girded with a pure gold girdle. The Word carried us and tied us as a girdle around His body through His pure love; still we remained members of His body and we shall rise with Him.

His body was like beryl. The word "*beryl*" means, "*hard to recognize*." Thus the prophet Daniel had previously declared that the body will be revealed to the world but many will have hard time to recognize it.

His face was like the appearance of a lightning, and his eyes like torches of fire. It is appropriate to declare the fiery power of His judgment so He shines with justice on the wicked and destroy them.

His arms and feet like burnished bronze in color. This was to declare that the first and the second call were for the Gentiles, "the last will be first and the first last." The sound of his words was like the voice of a multitude (Rev.19: 6). [We utter the words that were prophesied[3].]

St. Hippolytus of Rome

"***And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the***

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[1] *PL 25:696F.*
[2] *Bethany Parallel Commentary on O.T., p. 1802.*
[3] *AN Frs., vol. 5, p. 182.*

sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground" (7-9).

Daniel, who was the best person at that time, did not brag and was not self-righteous. He considered all his righteousness as filthy rags (Is 64: 6). The glory of the Lord overcame him so he fell to the ground, as though he fainted, then he heard God's voice.

Fear fell upon all those who were with Daniel and they escaped to hide. Perhaps they saw something strange, but they did not understand the vision, therefore they got scared and fled. God allowed that to happen lest anyone think that what Daniel had seen was some imagination or fantasy. He was chosen to become a tutor to reveal God's mysteries and to accept the divine knowledge, but he needed someone to witness that he was called to a divine task, thus God arranged for him to be among men when he saw the vision.

He repeated more than once that what he had uttered was a reality and that he had truly seen it. He called it a great vision so we may take heed and look into it.

Daniel trembled and lost his physical power until he became weak like a dead person. God does not want his children to be that weak, however He allows it for their edification. Sometimes when we are very healthy we do not heed to the divine voice and do not enjoy any inner heavenly vision. However, God allows some physical weakness to lift our inner energy to a specific heavenly message. The vision had scared Daniel, but the heavenly voice had filled him with peace and serenity and the touches of His hand gave him power.

3. ANGELIC MINISTRY

"Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands" (10).

It is obvious that Daniel saw the vision while he was lying on the ground, leaning on his knees and hands and in need of a heavenly help to assist him.

The hand, which wrote on the wall and scared King Belshazzar, is the same hand that touched Daniel, raised him and gave him the enjoyment of understanding. Some people see that the heavenly hand refers to the divine incarnation, where the Lord Jesus touched our lives and souls, granting us understanding and wisdom for our redemption and His glory.

St. Jerome said: [The angel appeared in the form of a man and put his hand on the prophet where he was lying on the ground. He appeared in a human form so Daniel may not fear him! [1]]

The appearance of the angels in the form of men reveals how the heaven values us as human beings. Though they do not have bodies like ours, yet they are not ashamed to appear in a human form, thus they declare the desire of the heavenly creatures to befriend us.

"***And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling***" (11).

The hand touched him and a heavenly voice urged him to rise, casting away any fear from him and granting him understanding. However, when Daniel rose, he was

[1] *PL 25:697G.*

trembling. Because of God's great love for us, he allows us to have some weaknesses so we may not be proud of ourselves. Daniel was the only person who was granted the gift of seeing visions. Although he received a divine help from Archangel Gabriel who touched him with his hand, talked with him and granted him understanding, yet he was still trembling to proof that he is mere dust and ashes, same as what Abraham felt about himself.

A heavenly hand touched him and raised him, it was probably the hand of Archangel Gabriel who was interpreting the vision to Daniel and who called Daniel "the beloved" to encourage him and support him.

St. Jerome commented on that saying: [The word "beloved" is an appropriate expression, for every saint carries beauty in himself and he is beloved from the Lord[1].]

The old prophet was scared and trembling but the angel encouraged him and reassured him that his prayers were answered.

"***Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words***" (12).

Archangel Gabriel asked Daniel not to fear and this was beyond Daniel's ability, thus he needed a divine help to grant him peace and to prepare his thoughts to understand the divine mysteries. When the Archangel told him, "Do not fear," he was not giving him a mere heavenly commandment, but a heavenly gift granted by God Himself to his beloved one. Why did God give all these gifts to Daniel and not to others? Is God biased? Does He have partiality? Never! But because Daniel had set his heart to understand through prayers, fasting and repentance with contrition; that is why he was given all these free gifts. He was not negligent and did not enjoy a lavishly, luxurious life, but was pleading God with seriousness to grant him understanding and knowledge. As St. John the Beloved said, "*If we ask anything according to His will, God hears us*" (1 John 5: 14).

Daniel humbled himself before the Lord, repenting with a contrite heart. Because of his strong personal relationship with God, he deserved that God sent his angel to him, for the angel of the Lord encamps around "*those who fear Him*" (Ps 145: 19).

"***But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia***" (13).

The angel justified the reason for his delay twenty-one days, or three weeks, which happened to be the three weeks of Daniel's fasting and entreating God. Daniel did not know that during those three weeks the angel was working to help the prophet. Often we think that God does not hear our prayers or that he is slow in answering, but He is concerned about us and He hides his work from us until we discover it at the appropriate time, then we are able to understand God's plan for us.

"***Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come***" (14).

The angel is confirming to Daniel that he came to let him know that his prayers were answered and that he is working for the advantage of Daniel's people to save them from the evils of the king of Persia. He came to declare that God's care is extended for many years. However, Daniel has to wait, with the spirit of prophecy, to see the coming events, not only until his departure from the land of captivity but until the coming of the

[1] *PL 25:697G.*

Lord Jesus, the Savior of the world.

❖ He, who doubts that God will answer his prayers, will not be answered. We have to ask with unbounded faith, as Daniel taught us, for God heard him since the first day he prayed. But he reaped the fruit of his prayers after 21 days. Therefore, let us not be lukewarm when our prayers are not immediately answered. Let us be persistent and have confidence as Daniel did for 21 days, for God was listening to his prayer since the first day[1].

Fr. Isaac

Archangel Gabriel clarified why God was late in answering Daniel's prayers, because for three weeks the Archangel was fighting the prince of the Persian Kingdom, until Archangel Michael, the intercessor of God's people, came and helped him. Who is the prince of the kingdom of Persia? Is it the king or an evil angel attacking God's work?

The reference to the prince of the kingdom of Persia does not mean a man but it means an evil angel who moves the kings of Persia against God's people. Therefore Archangel Gabriel, supported by Archangel Michael, destroyed the evil deeds of the prince against the believers. Hence, saying the prince of the kingdom of Persia does not mean a man but rather a devil who pushes the king of Persia to do evil.

St. Jerome said: [In my opinion, he is the angel appointed for Persia, as was mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy. "*When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel*" (Deut 32: 8). St. Paul said, "*However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*" (1 Cor 2: 6-8). Thus, the prince of Persia was attacking God's people in order to prevent them from being liberated from their captivity. Although God answered Daniel's prayer since the first day, yet He did not declare to him His compassionate decision because the prince of Persia has been attacking God's people for 21 days, enumerating the sins of the Jewish people as a just excuse that they should remain in captivity[2].]

Was Archangel Gabriel unable to resist the devil who instilled the spirit of hatred and violence in Cambyses against the believers? Or was he unable to resist the evil king himself? Why did God send Archangel Michael to help him? I do not think that receiving help from Archangel Michael is to lessen the status of Archangel Gabriel or his ability to defeat the evil, however, it reveals the spirit of the communal work, even among the heavenly creatures. It also reveals God's concern for his people, for He does not send them only one angel but more than one for the sake of His people. In the book of Samuel, Jonathan said, "*For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few*" (1 Sam 14: 6). Also, in the Chronicles, Asa said, "*Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power*" (2 Chron 14: 11).

Archangel Gabriel emphasized that his role has not ended yet, but God left him on purpose with the king of Persia who hated the people. God, in His justice, neither did He end the king's life nor did He force him to love the believers, but gave him free will to do

[1] *Cassian: conf. 9:34.*
[2] *PL 25:699.*

whatever he wants. However, for the sake of the believers, God sent His angels to defeat the evil king.

In the Jewish and the Christian traditions, Archangel Michael is considered as the guardian of God's people (12: 1).

4. DIVINE MINISTRY

"When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. And suddenly, one having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips, then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, 'My Lord, because of the vision, my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength. For how can this servant of my Lord talk with you, my Lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me." **(15-17)**

St. Jerome said: [Before we deserve to see God, it is proper that we realize with our inner nature the weakness of our side but when we actually have beheld a vision of God, then our inner nature is converted within us and we become wholly of the number of those concerning whom it is written in another Psalm: "*All the glory of the daughter of the king is within; in golden borders*" (Ps 45: 13) [1].]

When Daniel was overcome by his weakness, he fell to the ground again. But God gently cared for him. Daniel was unable to utter a word until God opened his lips. He let the angel touch his lips.

Because Daniel was unable to enter into a dialogue with God, the angel supported him, not only by encouraging him with words, but also by touching him. God wishes that we meet the heavenly creatures and have a fellowship of love with them, for both of us praise Him forever.

The angel appeared in the form of a man, so that Daniel may hear his words. In great love and humility, the angels appear to us in the form of human beings. The devil, on the contrary, tries to deceive us by transforming himself into an angel of light (2 Cor 11: 14).

Some people think that the One who appeared in the vision is the Son of God who always touches us by His divine love and gives us power to be in dialogue with Him.

Introduction of the last prophecy:

"Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me. And he said, 'O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!' So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, 'Let my Lord speak for You have strengthened me." **(18-19).**

St. Jerome said: [Had the angel not comforted Daniel and freed him from fear, he would not have been able to hear the mysteries of God. Therefore, Daniel said, "*Speak Lord, for you have strengthened me,*" for You have made me understand Your words[2].]

Daniel needed a continuous heavenly work, so the angel touched him, encouraged him, emphasizing that he is greatly beloved by God and the heavenly creatures, granting him peace and encouraging him to be strong by the divine commandment.

We, too, are in need of constant spiritual growth through our continuous encounter with God, enjoying the fellowship with the heavenly creatures and the saints. We are strengthened by the communal act and by listening to God's promises.

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[1] *PL 25:700A, B.*
[2] *PL 25:700B.*

"***Then he said, 'Do you know why I have come to You? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come***." (20).

❖ Truly I have come to tell you about matters, which answer your prayers. But I come once more to fight the king of Persia, for he does not want to free your people from captivity[1].

St. Jerome

"***But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince***" (21).

The Lord sent the angel, probably Gabriel, to talk to Daniel about a second chief. Here, he talks about the Greeks. He also declared that the devil sends his evil angels to stir the Gentiles to do evil.

The angel confirmed that God had a divine heavenly plan for Daniel and He gradually reveals it to him. God entrusted Michael, the Archangel, to protect His people from Satan and his evil powers.

God sent the angel to the Persian King Cambyses, but his mission has not yet been completed. The attack on God's people is continuing during the era of the Greek rulers, as well as the era of the Persian rulers. That is why the angel works among the kings who attack the truth, in order to protect the simple believers. God's care for His church never stops in any age nor generation, and He continues to send His angels to fight the evil powers.

[1] *PL 25:700B.*

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (10)

MAY YOU PROCLAIM YOUR GLORY
IN THE MIDST OF MY SUFFERINGS!

❖ Lord, grant me with Daniel the spirit of praying and fasting with humility.
Let me find in You my peace and the joy of my heart.
Let me not ask for a delicious food.
Let me confess with tears my sins and the sins of my people,
For I raise the voice of my cries to the throne of Your grace!

❖ Often I think that you have forgotten me and that You do not hear my prayers and groaning.
Open my eyes so that I may see You working for my sake.
You hide temporarily Your works from me,
So that I may have a dialogue with You!

❖ I fell down and I am scared.
O Holy One, let Your hand touch me.
Let me hear Your voice full of hope telling me to "Be of good courage."
Your words have dominion over my inner depths!

❖ I see the world attacking the truth and persecuting Your church.
I see Gabriel the Archangel working with Michael the Archangel to defend Your church and Your people!
You gave free will to the evil people, but due to Your great love.
You sent the heavenly host to protect us.
You are amazing in Your justice as well as in Your love.
Declare Your glory amidst Your sufferings!

CHAPTER 11

THE LAST VISION OF PERSIA, GREECE AND THE END OF TIMES

This chapter contains amazing prophetic details about the events that will take place in the world during a period of three centuries, which corresponded exactly to the historical events. As C. Larkin says: [This chapter is one of the most amazing chapters, more than any other chapter in the Holy Bible, because it presents the prophecies in details and with precision, which corresponds exactly to the history of the kings of Egypt and Syria for more than 350 years. Verses 5 through 31 relate the prophecies about the wars that erupted between the kings of the North (Syria) and the kings of the South (Egypt)[1].]

1. Prophecies about Persia 1-2
2. Prophecies about Greece 3-4
3. Prophecies about the conflict between Egypt and Syria 5-35
4. The end of times, the antichrist 36-45

1. PROPHECIES ABOUT PERSIA

"***Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him***" (1).

Some people may think that this statement is about the strengthening of Archangel Michael to Archangel Gabriel. But this is not acceptable because this statement is directed to Archangel Gabriel who stood beside Darius the king and strengthened him to support Cyrus the king of Persia against the Babylonians. In other words, if some of the Persian kings have attacked God's people and were victorious, we have to understand that this was with God's permission and with the power granted to the kings through the angels of God. Here the angel does not brag about his power nor his own abilities but act as a steward of God and in the name of God who works through His angels.

"***And now I will tell you the truth: Behold three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece***" (2).

All the prophecies in this chapter pertain to the kingdoms of Persia and Greece, then the conflict between Egypt and Syria. All these verses were to declare God's care for His church and urge the believers to trust the Lord and His divine care even during the critical times. Truly, there were worldly struggles between many great countries like Babylon, Persia, Medes, and Greece, and between the two parts of the Greek Empire, which are the country of the Ptolomies, and the country of the Selucusians. Behind all these events, God's hidden hand changes everything for the edification of the Church, and to proof that God gives priority and special concern to people, even if it is unnoticeable.

Despite the fact that this prophecy was given in the third year of the reign of Cyrus (10: 1), still Archangel Gabriel refers to Darius and to the strength he gave him. Most of this happened during the time when Daniel was thrown in the den.

[1] *C. Larkine: The Book of Revelation, p. 113.*

Some people think that the three kings who ruled Persia after Cyrus were:

1. Cambyses: the son of Cyrus (527 – 522 BC). It is believed that while he was in Egypt, his younger brother Magus (also called Smerdis) was murdered.

2. Smerdis (522 – 521 BC) married Pantaptes, the daughter of Cambyses and stayed in the reign for seven months.

3. Darius Hystaspes or Darius I (521 BC – 486 BC) became king and married Pantaptes, the wife of the previous king. He had a son called Ahasuerus who became one of the richest and most famous kings.

Others see that when the angel mentioned the three kings, he meant Cyrus, his son Cambyses and Darius, ignoring Smerdis completely.

The Archangel also talked about a fourth king who superseded the former three kings. This was Ahasuerus the son of Darius (480 –465 BC) who married Esther. **St. Justine**[1] talked about the wealth of Ahasuerus who conquered Greece with an army of about 2,641,000 soldiers. The Greeks were determined to take their revenge, and they did. Ahasuerus spent four years gathering his army, but he was not successful in organizing it because of the exceedingly great number of the soldiers. Due to his pride, he was conquered in Salamis and managed to escape in a small boat but could not find any ship to rescue him, although his giant fleet covered the sea. His people considered him unfit to lead the army and they despised him for killing his brother and committing many crimes especially against his sister.

The angel considered the remainder of the Persian kings as defeated, for the kingdom of Persia deteriorated and the kings had no prestige at all until Alexander the Macedonian ruled the world.

St. Jerome said: [We have to note here that when Cyrus and the kings of Persia were defeated, the book did not mention anything about the other nine kings but mentioned Alexander right away. This is to say that the spirit of prophecy does not care about the historical details, but briefly presents only the very important events[2].]

2. PROPHECIES CONCERNING THE GREEKS

"***Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these***" (3-4).

In the appropriate time, Alexander the Great (356 – 323 BC) will appear and will conquer Persia and other countries. Alexander the Great had great animosity toward the Jews. On his way to Judea, he saw a vision, which was fulfilled when he saw the chief priest, in his priesthood clothes, presenting him with the prophecies of Daniel to confirm that he has conquered Persia and will establish a great kingdom. From that moment, his enmity changed to friendship and he improved his dealings with the Jews.

After many conquests and victories, he died all of the sudden while he was drunk. No one knows if he had died from a sudden disease, if he had committed suicide, or if Cassander had poisoned him. The angel told Daniel, "*And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up*…." This means that after conquering all the countries in the

[1] *St. Justin: Apol. 1:10.*
[2] *PL 25:701.*

East and becoming the only king to rule them, by his sudden death his kingdom was demolished. We had previously talked about the conflicts, which happened after his death until his kingdom was divided among four of his generals shortly after the Ipsus battle.

The angel said, "***For his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these***" (4). This prophecy was precisely fulfilled, for none of his children nor his relatives inherited the throne. Four generals, who are in no way related to Alexander the Great, took over the throne, although he had two sons, Hercules and Alexander II, but one was murdered before his father's death and the other one after his death.

St. Jerome said: [Besides the four kingdoms, which are Macedonia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt, the Macedonian kingdom was split between other rulers less important and between small kings. Perdiccas, Lysimachus, Craterus and others ruled Cappadocea, Armenia, Bithynia, Heracleia and Bophorus. Later on, other regions have withdrawn from the Macedonian power and appointed their own kings[1].]

The angel has declared all that to Daniel the prophet many years before the birth of Alexander the Great.

3. SPECIAL PROPHESIES ABOUT THE WARS BETWEEN EGYPT AND SYRIA

These prophecies talked about the wars between the Selucusians and the Ptolomies. Those two families were in constant war because of the geographical location of Palestine between Egypt and Syria. In most cases Palestine was the battleground, and the kings of Egypt were called the kings of the South and the kings of Syria were called the kings of the North.

The war between the North and the South was extended over a long period - about two centuries - and when the angel talks about the king of the North or the king of the South, he does not mean one king for both countries.

A. The First War

"***Also the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion***" (5).

The first king of the South, **Ptolemy I Lagus** (323 – 285 BC), was very strong, smart and rich, much stronger than Antiochus the son of Seleucus, the king of the North (Syria). However, later on Antiochus became stronger and richer, for Babylon and Medes were added to his kingdom. The angel knew that Antiochus would become much stronger than Ptolemy.

St. Jerome said: [The person referred to as "Ptolemy" is **Ptolemy Philadelphios**, the second king of Egypt, and the son of Ptolemy I Lagus. It was noted that during his era, seventy scholars translated the Holy Bible into Greek (The Septuagint). He also sent many treasures to Jerusalem and vessels to the temple, to Lazarus the chief priest. His librarian was called Dimitrius of Phalrum, a man of fame among the Greeks as a great philosopher. It was also reported that Ptolemy Philadephios was stronger than his father Ptolemy I Lagus. His army counted 200,000 soldiers, 20,000 horses, 2000 chariots and 400 elephants, which he had imported from Ethiopia. His treasure of gold and silver was tremendous, and his annual income from Egypt was 14,800 silver pieces. The harvest of

[1] *PL 25:703.*

wheat ranged between half a million to a million kilos[1].]

"***And at the end of some years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times***" (6).

Daniel prophesied about the end of the war between the kings of Egypt and Syria in the year 250 BC, when an agreement was reached between them by the marriage of the king of Syria with the daughter of the king of Egypt.

Antiochus Theos (285–246 BC), the third king of Syria, divorced his wife Laodice to get married to Berenice or Betonice, the daughter of Ptolemy II (283–246 BC) who was called Philadelphios. Philadelphios gave his daughter a dowry of thousands of silver and golden pieces; he was also called Phernophorus, or dowry-giver (*dotalis*). The purpose for which Ptolemy allowed his daughter marry the king of Syria was for him to dominate Syria and all the kingdom of Antiochus. However, the plan failed because Laodice, whom Antiochus had divorced, was kept in the palace as a concubine and not as a queen. As a result, she stirred her friends against the king and killed him. Laodice then enthroned her oldest son, Seleucus Callinicus, and appointed her youngest son, Hierax, governor over Asia Minor. The oldest son deceived Berenice and killed her as well as her son. Thus deceit and cheating entered the lives of the two kings and they both failed.

Thus, the prophecy was literally fulfilled, for the plan of the king of Egypt completely failed when the king was not able to introduce his daughter to get married to the king of Syria, also she, her husband who supported her and her son were all murdered.

B. The Second War

"***But from a branch of her roots one shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail. And he shall also carry their god's captive to Egypt, with their princes and their precious articles of silver and gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the North. Also the king of the North shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land***" (7-9).

The reference here is to a branch from the family of Berenice who will come with an army to conquer the king of the North. This truly had happened when Ptolemy III Euergetes, the brother of Berenice, the third king of Egypt who succeeded his father Philadelphios, prepared a great army to take revenge for his sister. He truly defeated the king of Syria, Callinicus, with his mother Laodice, and won many victories. Not only did he conquer Syria, but also Cecilia and other regions at the Euphrates. He almost dominated over all Asia[2]. The news from Egypt about a rebellion made Euregetus go back to Egypt dragging the captives, with two and a half thousand silver and golden statues, which Cambyses had brought from Egypt a long time ago. He also carried with him 40,000 talents of silver. Callinicus did not think of going into battle again with Euregetus, for he knew that he cannot conquer him or restore what he had carried away as a prey. Euregetus remained a king for 46 years. When Callinicus felt that Euregetus will

[1] *PL 25:703*
[2] *PL 25:706.*

defeat him, he asked for help from his brother Hierax, the governor of Asia Minor. But Hierax did not care about his brother's cries for he felt that he is the one who deserves the throne. Later on, he battled against his brother Callinicus who fell dead on his horse, while Euregetus remained king of Egypt 4 years after the death of the king of Syria. In any case, Euregetus did not return to Syria.

C. The Third War

"***However his sons shall stir up strife, and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one shall certainly come and overwhelm and pass through; then he shall return to his fortress and stir up strife. And the king of the South shall be moved with rage, and go out and fight with him, with the king of the North, who shall muster a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into the hand of his enemy***" (10-11).

The prophecy in those verses is about the sons of the late king Callinicus, namely Seleucus II Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great, who assembled an army to take revenge from the Egyptians after the death of Euregetus. Ceraunus, with his army, was able to restore the Syrian land, but he was killed in Phyriga in the third year of his reign, for Nicanor and Apaturius deceived him while he was getting ready for the battle against Egypt, leaving his brother, Antiochus the Great, to rule the country. Antiochus the Great became an important king and led a huge army against Egypt. At that time, Ptolemy Philopator was the fourth king of Egypt. The name Philopator, synonym of shame, means "the lover of his father." The people hated him for he was known to be coward and careless. For this reason, Antiochus the Great decided to battle against him in Rafah in the year 217 BC The king of Egypt, too, gathered a big army, the same size as the army of Syria and was getting ready for the battle. He won the victory over the army of Antiochus in a great massacre.

Philopator did not win Antiochus the Great by his bravery and power, but because God allowed that to happen to abase the pride of the latter.

Since Philopator was negligent in pursuing his victories and did not trust any of the people surrounding him, he decided to make peace with Antiochus in an inappropriate manner.

"***When he has taken away the multitude, his heart will be lifted up; and he will cast down tens of thousands, but he will not prevail***" (12).

The historians say that Philopator could have invaded Syria very easily, but he indulged himself in his sexual desires, lust and committed many crimes. After returning from the war, he killed his wife, Eurydice, and yielded the rule to an evil lady called Agathoclea, who played music. He fell in love with her brother, Agathocles, and appointed him a general commander of Egypt.

After he led many victories and the whole East used to fear him, he indulged in drinking with carelessness and his only concern was making banquets, thus his heart was full of disgrace.

"***For the king of the North will return and muster a multitude greater than the former; and shall certainly come at the end of some years with a great army and much equipment. Now in those times many shall rise up against the king of the South. Also, violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they shall fall***" (13-14).

Here the angel reveals to the prophet that many wars will arise. Egypt was found without a king after the death of Ptolemy Philopator, for his son Ptolemy Epiphanes the

Fifth (203–181 BC) was only four years old. Agathocles deviated and all the regions under Egypt's rule rebelled and had many internal problems. Antiochus attacked Egypt at that time, for it became very weak. The Egyptians then turned to Rome to seek help. The Romans wanted to expand their authority over the entire world, so they asked Antiochus to stop the war. He failed in his war against Egypt and after several attempts he finally won the battle against the Egyptian Commander Scopas, on the boundaries of Judea. The angel clarified to Daniel that Antiochus the Great was not the only enemy of Egypt, but that there were many enemies in line.

Antiochus made truce with Philip III the Macedonian, and asked for help from the Jews. The righteous Jews refused to help him, but some of the Jews supported him.

What does the angel mean by saying, "***Also violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they shall fall***" (14)? **St. Jerome**[1] says that this prophecy is about the high priest, Onias, who defiled the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem. He escaped to Egypt and took with him a great number of the Jews. Ptolemy received him in great honor and offered him the region of Hiliopolis, where he built an altar to the Lord, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah that "*there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt"* (Is 19: 19). The book of Maccabees confirmed this fact as well as Josephus the historian. St. Jerome said that the temple remained in its place for 250 years until the era of Vesbesian. The city itself was called "Onias" and it was destroyed during the war between the Jews and the Romans. No traces of the temple or the city were found during the days of St. Jerome.

"***So the king of the North shall come and build a siege mound, and take a fortified city; and the forces of the South shall not withstand him. Even his choice troops shall have no strength to resist. But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and no one shall stand against him. He shall stand in the Glorious Land with destruction in his power. He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do. And he shall give him the daughter of women to destroy it; but she shall not stand with him, or be for him***" (15-17).

St. Jerome said: [In order to restore Judea and some other cities belonging to Syria, Antiochus had to go in battle against Scopas, the Egyptian Commander, near Jordan, close to a city called Peneas. Scopas fled the battle but he was attacked in Sidon along with ten thousand of his soldiers, but the Egyptians were unable to fight back. Thus, Antiochus sat in the "Glorious Land," Palestine, which fell under his domain. It was referred to in the Septuagint as the "land of desire" which meant the land of which God was pleased. God has revealed to Daniel what will happen, so when Palestine fell in the hands of Antiochus, the righteous man was not heart broken, but realized that God had previously revealed to him that all this will happen. Thus, the prophecy becomes a source of consolation the times of tribulations and persecutions. In order to have Egypt under his control, Antiochus gave his beautiful daughter Cleopatra to be the wife of the Egyptian Ptolemy, thinking that Egypt will then submit to his authority. But Cleopatra did not support her father and chose to support her husband. Therefore, Antiochus directed his attention to Asia Minor, instead of Egypt, where he headed with his navy fleet and invaded many of the islands.

"***After this, he shall turn his face to the coast-lands, and shall take many. But a***

[1] *PL 25:707.*

ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end; and with the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him" (18).

Asia Minor and the coast of the Mediterranean, Greece, Cyprus and all the islands in the sea are what it is referred to as coastlands. It was the custom of the Jews to call all the regions by the sea, coastlands.

Antiochus, with his small army, was able to advance to Asia Minor. With him, was Hannibal, whose fame had spread to the Romans and terrified them. Therefore, it was not difficult to expel the Romans from every region they headed to. Hannibal became a close friend of Antiochus, however Antiochus had doubts about his loyalty. Antiochus then went to Greece where Hannibal married a beautiful girl and had a big wedding ceremony in full peace, as if he was in his own country. Due to his great fame, he invaded many countries and liberated them from the Romans as the angel told Daniel, "*he shall turn his face to the coast-lands and shall take many*" (18).

When Antiochus rejected Hannibal's counsel, he began to deteriorate and became a reproach. He used to mock the Romans and invaded some regions in Greece, which were allies of the Romans. The Roman general Lucius, or Acilius Scipio Nasica, along with his brother Publius Scipio Aficanus, were able to attract Antiochus beyond the Taurus Mountain and conquered him in Magnesia, thus taking their revenge for all the mocking which he had uttered against the Romans. Therefore, the angel said, "*But a ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end; and with the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him*" (18). Antiochus was then defeated before the Greeks who were the allies of the Romans. At this point, many people blame General Scipio because he left the Roman prestige under the leadership of Philip the Macedonian.

"***Then he shall turn his face toward the fortress of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found***" (19).

Antiochus, defeated by the Roman general Scipio, went back to his country to get support after the undergone loss. On his way home, he tried to plunder the temple of Jupiter Dodoneus in Elymais, close to Shushan, in order to pay the duty to the Romans. But, the people rebelling against him killed him, and his soldiers. Therefore the angel said, "*But he shall stumble and fall and not be found*" (19).

Antiochus died in the year 187 BC His first son, Seleucus Philopator, also known as Ceraunus, succeeded him (187 – 176 BC). The second son was called Dimitrius, and the third was called Antiochus Epiphanes. Now the angel will talk about Seleucus Philopator.

"***There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes on the glorious kingdom; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but not in anger or in battle***" (20).

Seleucus Philopator, Antiochus's successor, had exaggerated in imposing taxes on people (20), to pay the duty to Rome. So he sent his Prime Minister Heliodorus to Jerusalem to plunder the temple. Afterwards, Heliodorus robbed his master and Antiochus Epiphanes succeeded his brother as ruler of Syria.

"***And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue***" (21).

All the historians agree that Antiochus Epiphanes was a crafty person and very stubborn. He even used to bluff the Romans. When the news of the death of his father reached Rome, they released him for they were content with his brother Dimitrius. At his arrival in his country, the people greeted him with great welcome. His brother, Seleucus,

did not stay in power for a long time and left his son to succeed him. Antiochus, with his deceitfulness, was able to take over the rule without right. Therefore, the angel said, "*To whom they will not give the honor of royalty….*" Furthermore, he said, "*and seize the kingdom by intrigue.*" How did it happen? Antiochus Epiphanes pretended to be a man of peace to his nephew, who was the legitimate heir of the kingdom and its guardian. Thus, he was able to withdraw the kingdom from him.

"***With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant***" (22).

Antiochus realized that his people were attacking him because they discovered his deceitfulness and the way he excluded his nephew from ruling Syria. He also encountered many difficulties from the surrounding countries like Egypt, whose king was Ptolemy Philometor. His advisors were in good terms with his nephew, the son of Seleucus, whom he dismissed. They, and other people from the surrounding countries, sent a secret help to the son of Seleucus to attack Antiochus. But all these attacks were defeated, as the angel said. All of the above was not due to the power of Antiochus, but with God's permission, he was allowed to take over the rule to chasten the Jews at that time.

Who was the prince of the covenant who was defeated before Antiochus? The prince of the covenant meant Ptolemy Philometor for he was a relative of the legitimate heir, the son of Seleucus.

Ptolemy Philometor was the son of Ptolemy Philopator and Cleopatra, the sister of Seleucus. Though he was a small child who could not rule by himself, yet he was the prince of the covenant, being the king of Egypt.

"***And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people***" (23).

At the beginning, Antiochus was despised in Syria, and there were attempts, supported by Egypt, to restore the kingdom to "Ibn Seleucus" the legitimate ruler. But Antiochus approached the king of Egypt (his nephew). asking for his friendship, especially that Cleopatra, his mother and the sister of Antiochus, was still alive. Ptolemy Philometor felt safe with his uncle Antiochus and became his friend. As soon as Antiochus secured the friendship of his Egyptian nephew, he made a riot on Egypt and invaded some Egyptian cities. He occupied them by force when his nephew did not expect such a move.

"***He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers; he shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but only for a time***" (24).

Through his deceitfulness, not with a great army, he was able to occupy some cities belonging to his nephew and carry their spoil and riches to his country, for the Egyptians lived in luxury. Antiochus thought about a way to attack Egypt again as a second round.

Antiochus surpassed his fathers and forefathers in deceiving people, especially in the East where breaking oaths was considered a disgrace.

"***He shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the South with a great army. And the king of the South shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand, for they shall devise plans against him***" (25).

After his conquest, Antiochus prepared a great army to attack Egypt again and its

cities. He needed a long time to build up an army after he had occupied many countries by his deceitfulness. In the meantime, his nephew realized the interests of his uncle in Egypt, so he made himself ready with a big army.

Verses 21–25 focused on Antiochus Epiphanes, whom we talked about earlier in chapter 8, and who was the antichrist of the Old Testament.

The men at the castle called him Epiphanes, or the exalted, for he was very interested in art and in buildings. Some people used to change one letter in his name and call him "Epimanus" which means "the crazy," for he was violent, deceitful, and insane in his behavior.

"***Yes, those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain***" (26).

God allowed that Ptolemy be defeated before Antiochus, for he was indulging in delicacies without any concern at all for his country.

"***Both these kings' hearts shall be bent on evil, and they shall speak lies at the same table; but it shall not prosper, for the end will still be at the appointed time***" (27).

The two kings, the uncle and his nephew, were evil and deceitful. Therefore, when Ptolemy was defeated, the two kings asked for reconciliation to become friends again, so that each can plot to destroy the other. Antiochus conquered his nephew, but he was unable to continue the journey, for he was afraid to be defeated before the rest of the fortified cities. The two sat on one table, but their hearts were full of hatred and detest. That is what politics does to many people, and consequently one loses his confidence even in the closest ones to him.

The angel said that the end will be at the appointed time (27), meaning that all what had happened was within a timeframe so that God's plan will be fulfilled, for the end has not yet come because God had appointed a time for everything.

"***While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land***" (28).

Antiochus returned to his land, Syria, and did not rule over Egypt, but he carried with him many riches, then he went to stir a war against Jerusalem, the holy temple and all the Jews. He had to leave Jerusalem and many treasuries behind, as was stated in 2 Kings 5: 2, where God made many wonders. He added what he had plundered from the temple to what he had robbed from Egypt and went back to Syria with the intention to come back to attack the holy covenant, that is, to attack God Himself.

"***At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant***" (29-30).

Soon after the agreement on a truce between Antiochus and his nephew was reached and after they sat together at one table, Antiochus prepared a big army, broke the covenant and invaded Egypt as well as besieged Alexandria. At that time, a Roman mission arrived in Egypt under the leadership of Publuis or Popilus, from Macedonia or Greece or Italy. Antiochus as usual, greeted him very kindly, but Publuis was not deceived by Antiochus asked that he immediately departs, as an order from the Roman Senate. Antiochus asked to be given a break until he counsels with his friends, but Publuis drew a circle with his rod and asked to call the meeting with the counselors and

negotiate with them before leaving that circle, or else he will declare the war against Antiochus. Antiochus did not hesitate, surrendered himself in the hands of the Senator and left Egypt. Those are the historical facts, which the angel had declared to Daniel the prophet.

Antiochus did not sate his greediness in Egypt, but returned to Syria in shame, for he had to evade the Roman Senator on one word from him and left Egypt immediately. Therefore, he redirected again all his energies against Jerusalem and the holy temple. This time, he returned with much more violence to look for the Jews who forsook the holy covenant to use them against the Jewish nation and the holy matters. This was fulfilled as stated in the second book of Maccabees chapters three to five.

"***And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation***" (31).

The forces, which supported Antiochus, were the ones who denied God and forsook the covenant, thus they supported the evil king against the divine truth (2 Mac 4).

The Jews mistakenly heard that Antiochus was killed, so they rejoiced. On his return to Jerusalem, when he heard that, he treated them very brutally. The Jews resorted to Rome asking for support. Rome sent an army, while Antiochus went to attack the Jewish powers. Antiochus submitted to Rome and promised to keep peace. But as soon as the Roman powers left Jerusalem, he betrayed the covenant. Some Jews also helped him in that betrayal.

Due to his known craftiness, he did not forbid the worship of the Living God, but he mingled God's worship with the pagan worship inside the temple. He defiled the temple by putting the statue of Jupiter Olympius in it. Then gradually he stopped the Jewish worship, made himself a god and offered a pig on the altar. The faithful people revolted against him, under the leadership of the Maccabees. Thousands of the Maccabees were killed during this revolution. That was considered "the abomination of desolation of the temple," a symbol of the abomination of desolation which will happen at the end of days and which the Lord Jesus Christ referred to in Matt. 24: 25.

"***Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits***" (32).

The angel clarifies how the priest and the people were divided into two groups, one group was deceived by the flattery of Antiochus, and the other group abided in God's knowledge, therefore God granted them more power and understanding.

St. Jerome said that he has no doubt that this will happen again during the time of the antichrist, where many will attack him and escape from him. The Jews explained the abomination of desolation of the temple through Vasbesian and Titus. They say that many people kept their faith in the Lord and were killed for keeping the covenant[1].

St. Jerome said: [We read in the Maccabees that the Jews who pretended to be the guardians of the covenant of God, had in fact entered in a covenant with the Gentiles. In my opinion, this is what will happen during the time of the antichrist when the love of God of many people will cool off. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth*?" (Luke 18: 8) [2].]

"***And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days***

[1] *PL 25:717.*
[2] *PL 25:716.*

they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue" (33-34).

The wise peoples (mostly priests) rejected the intrigues of Antiochus and taught many people to consider all kinds of sufferings, whether burning or plundering their possessions, captivity, or killing by the sword as glory and honor for them.

This was the call to the faithful people about their relationship with God, does not get fooled by the flattery of any person, no matter how high his position is. This was the call of the priests and the leaders to accept the sword and the fire and not lose their loyalty to God and their abiding by the divine commandment. Though the believers seem to have failed and have no support except from few, like the Maccabees, yet they should not care about the temporal glories and the love of praise.

"***And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time***" (35).

In this verse, the angel confirms that some people will fall. Perhaps he means that they will fall by the sword or by burning in the fire, but this does not mean that God will not support them. God permits that to happen during the tribulation for their salvation and their purification so that they may become white. They are considered martyrs, who go through the fire so they may be purified as pure gold.

Thus God was preparing the souls of the Maccabees, not only since they were born, but also before they were even created. So when they see the attack coming very vigorously, they go back to Daniel's prophecies and they become strengthened with good courage.

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: [Antiochus became king over Syria. He ruled in the year 107 of the Greek calendar. In the meantime, he stirred a war against Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, and conquered him. On his return from Egypt, he went to Jerusalem in the year 103, carrying with him all the treasures of the house of God and went to Antioch. Two years later, the king sent a tax collector to Judea to force the Jews to forsake the covenant of their fathers and to submit to the king's decree. He tried to force them to obey by saying, "Obey the commands of the king, so you may live." But they replied, "No, we do not obey the king's decree, but we are willing to die in purity." So he executed thousands of them (1 Macc. 2:32). Thus, what Daniel prophesied was fulfilled, "*They shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering*" (33). Daniel added, "*They shall be aided with a little help*" (34), for Mattias and Judas the Maccabees went to help them and deliver them from the hands of the Greek[1].]

All of a sudden, the vision was switched to the end of days and to the coming of the antichrist, with full details of his evil deeds.

4. THE END OF DAYS, THE ANTICHRIST

[36-39] provide the same personal in (da 7: 8; 9:26) about the "little horn", here he calls the king, who works according to His will. [36].

"***Then the king shall do according to his own will; he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be***

[1] *AN Frs., vol. 5, p. 183.*

done. He shall regard neither the God of his father's nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all" (36-37).

The Jews differed in their explanation of the previous statement. Some thought that the angel meant Antiochus Epiphanes, while others thought that he meant some of the Romans like Vesbesian and his son Titus, or even the exalted Roman Empire of which some emperors made themselves gods and asked the people to worship their statues. However, the church fathers agreed that the angel meant here the antichrist and not Antiochus, because what was stated after that does not apply to Antiochus.

This man, who acts according to his own will and above all, is like Lucifer who glorified himself (Is 14: 13,14). He blasphemes against God and does not regard the God of his fathers. This statement made some people say that the antichrist will be a Jew blaspheming against the faith.

Saying that the antichrist is a ruler who will reestablish the Roman Empire and attack the Jews, made some people think that he will be a Christian denying the faith.

The Hebrew word for "The God of his fathers" is "Elohim."

"**The desire of women**." **St. Jerome** said that there are two interpretations for this sentence. Either the angel means asking the desire of women or denying this desire. The antichrist will pretend to be chaste in order to deceive many[1]. Some people think that the sentence reflects the desire of the Jewish women to conceive and give birth to the Messiah. Probably, it means that the antichrist does not care about women and their desires; Hitler was a man of this kind. In the sixteenth century, there was two opinions that Calven rejected, the first that the Pope is the one meant here, for in the rules concerning the Pope Siricius there came in chapter seven volume one of Councils that those who follow the body do not please God, considering marriage is nearly adultery. As for the second opinion is the desire of women where it is permitted to each person to be married legally with more than one woman. Some think that this talks concerns the Roman emperors who were famous for their hatred to their wives and to women in general.

St. Jerome also said that this statement refers to the Antichrist and not to Antiochus, for the latter attempted to oblige the Jews and the Samaritans to feast for his gods; he even made statues for the Greek gods. However, the antichrist does not care about the god of his fathers, but he makes himself a god.

"***But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver; with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain***" (38-39).

In those verses, the angel talks about the antichrist. The god whom his fathers did not know is the antichrist himself. He refers the divine honors to himself and seeks all the riches and the authority. Thus, he is the strange god who presents gifts to all who submit to him and are deceived by him.

Some people say that this applies to the Roman Empire, which rejected the worship of the True Living God. Its god was the power, the fortresses and the love of authority by collecting taxes and financial gains from its colonies. The emperors made golden or silver statues for themselves and for their gods. They considered themselves

[1] *PL 25:719B.*

better and stronger than the gods. They looked up toward Rome as the god whom everyone should honor.

The Greeks never dared to attack the gods. The Romans, however, often pretended that they honor the strange gods of other nations, but in fact they mocked them and called for their denial, considering their country above all considerations.

"***At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow at his heels. But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him***" (40-45).

Here we discern three personalities:

1. The antichrist
2. The king of the South (Egypt)
3. The king of the North (Syria)

St. Jerome said: [Antiochus had partially fulfilled that prophecy. "*The Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow at his heels*." Antiochus did not conquer Libya, which most authors interpret as North Africa, nor did he conquer Ethiopia[1].]

The center of the antichrist will be in Jerusalem and his dominion will extend across the seas, especially the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. He will be stationed at the glorious holy mountain, which is Mount Zion. In spite of all the power and authority he has; yet no one will support him. He will collapse before Elijah and Enoch who supported the church at that time and who prepare the believers for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.

St. Jerome said: [Our school of thought insists that the antichrist will perish in the same place where the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven, the Mount of Olive[2].]

[1] *PL 25:721.*
[2] *PL 25:723.*

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (11)

MAY HISTORY PASS AND THE END OF TIMES COME!

- All the history is under Your control, and nothing is hidden from You.
  Giants arise and many perish.
  Covenants are established, some keep them while others break them.
  Kingdom arises against kingdom, and all is past history.
- May all the events of the history pass away, and may the End of Times come.
  The Antichrist will poison all, but the Conqueror One, the Christ is certainly coming!
  May You, the Victorious One, come and may Your believers be glorified!

CHAPTER 12

THE GREAT TRIBULATION AND THE RESURRECTION

St. Hippolytus of Rome wrote that Daniel talked about the great tribulation, or the abomination of desolation, which was partially fulfilled – on a local level -during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and it will be globally fulfilled during the days of the antichrist at the end of times[1]. Many of the fathers, especially St. Jerome, see that the words chosen here are very clear and that they refer to the antichrist at the end of times.

1. The great tribulation 1
2. The resurrection 2-3
3. Conclusion 4-13

1. THE GREAT TRIBULATION

"***At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in book***" (1).

Starting the chapter with "*At that time*," indicates that the angel is continuing the previous chapter. At the peak of the authority of the Antichrist, Archangel Michael will arise to work for the benefit of the church, as was stated in the book of Revelation chapter 12. This will be during great tribulation which the Lord Jesus Christ talked about in the book of Matthew 24: 15–22.

During the difficult times, God delivers the people of Daniel, that is the church of the faithful, whose names are written in the Book of Life. The church constantly faces tribulations but God never forgets His church. The more the church go through tribulation, the more God shows his concern toward her. The church is in the hands of her Savior the Lord Jesus Christ who works for her edification, and sends His angels and archangels to protect her.

2. THE RESURRECTION

"***And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever***" (2-3).

The book of Daniel is considered the first book in the Old Testament, which clearly mentions the resurrection, when the Day of the Lord comes and the wise who obeyed God shine like eternal stars. This seemed to be above Daniel's comprehension, for he said, "***Although I heard, I did not understand***" (8).

Some people try to distinguish between two kinds of resurrection: one for the thousand years and the other for the eternal life. However, it is clear here that the angel means one resurrection and one eternal judgment, either eternal glory or eternal punishment.

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[1] *Scholia on Daniel, 12:11.*

❖ The teachers who know the Law and apply it, and those who preach other nations to worship God will shine like stars in eternity[1].

St. Jerome

❖ Let us flee all the obstacles of the world with all our effort and devote our time to praying and reading the Bible for the salvation of our souls. Thus, this saying will be fulfilled in us: "***Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament***" (3)[2]]

Fr. Caesarius

❖ When the antichrist will perish by one breath of the Savior, the people in the Book of God will be judged according to their deeds, some will go to eternal life and others will go to eternal reproach. He compares the teachers to heaven itself, and describes those who teach others as the brightness of the stars. It is not enough that one becomes wise but he has to teach this wisdom to others. The one who can teach but remains silent and does not edify others is not rewarded.

St. Jerome

❖ The Lord helps the humble, and the humble are transformed into stars, for the righteous shine like stars, as Daniel said[3].

St. Jerome

3. CONCLUSION

"***But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase***" (4).

The angel ordered Daniel to seal the book until the time of the end has come. However, knowledge shall increase for many shall run to and fro. But one will always be puzzled until what is written in the book is fulfilled. When the angel talked about sealing the book, he probably meant to protect the secrecy of the prophecies until the salvation is fulfilled in the fullness of time when all the secrets of the Second Coming will be revealed as mentioned in the book of Revelation (Rev 22: 10). Many scholars see that the book of Revelation is the key to the book of Daniel.

St. Ireneaus said that the divine inspiration asked Daniel to seal the prophecy, so that no one can comprehend it until the Lord Jesus comes, for He is the goal of all the prophecies. Then the faithful will realize its mystery.

He said: [The hidden treasure in the Holy Book is Christ, where all the symbols and the proverbs refer to Him. We would have never understood His human nature before the coming of the Lord, therefore, the angel told Daniel, "*Shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase*" (4). Before the fulfillment of any prophecy, it is considered as a mystery, but when the due time comes and it is fulfilled then it becomes very clear and certain[4].]

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: [All the prophecies of the Holy Book were sealed and were unknown to people. This is what Isaiah said to proof it, "*The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is*

[1] *PL 25:725*
[2] *Sermon 7:4.*
[3] *On Ps. hom. 56.*
[4] *Adv. Haer. 4:26:1.*

literate, saying, 'Read this, please,' and he says, 'I cannot, for it is sealed." (Is 29: 11). All what the prophets had uttered in the past were sealed and hidden from the Pharisees who thought that they knew every letter in the Law. However, everything was revealed to the believers. The old matters were all sealed, but now by the grace of God, everything is revealed to the saints. For the Lord Himself is the Seal and the church is the key, He opens and no one shuts, and He shuts and no one opens, as was mentioned in the book of Revelation (Rev 3: 7). Therefore, the angel told Daniel, "*Shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end*." However, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we know the will of God and believe that He sent the Lord Jesus for the salvation of the human race[1].]

St. Jerome said: [The one who declared the truth to Daniel declared that these matters were secret. He asked him to shut up the words and seal the book, thus upon reading it, many will not understand and will differ in interpreting it because it is very mysterious. It is written, "*many shall run to and fro*," meaning that many will read it. Also in the book of Revelation, there was a sealed scroll and no one was worthy to open the scroll or loosen its seals. St. John said, "*So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals*" (Rev 5: 4-5). The scroll can be opened by the one who learns the mysteries of the book and who is willing to understand its hidden truths. He can then interpret the proverbs and can transform the letter, which kills to the Spirit that gives life[2].]

"***Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, 'How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?' Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My Lord, what shall be the end of these things?' And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand***" (5–10).

To conclude the book, Daniel saw two angels and One wearing linen, who is the Word of God before the incarnation (Dan 10:6). One of the two angels asked Him about the duration of the tribulation. The answer was for one time, two times and a half time, that is, for three and a half years, the period of severe persecution. This is the half-week that Daniel mentioned previously, which ended by the defeat of the violent king. **St. Jerome**[3] said that "the time, the two times and a half time" is not a reference to the three and a half years during which Antiochus had defiled the temple, as Porphyry claimed. For if it is true, it means that the conqueror enjoys eternal kingdom that all the kings submit to him and obey him, and this has never happened. It is evident that he is there about the Antichrist who will rule for 1290 days or three and a half years.

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[1] *AN Frs., vol. 5, p. 180-1.*
[2] *PL 25:726 - 727.*
[3] *PL 25:729.*

Daniel was asked to conclude the book for it contains mysteries, which no one knows. Daniel himself said, "***Although I heard, I did not understand***…" (8). But in the meantime, he ascertains that whoever is holy will understand and will become wise and that the evil will not understand. Knowledge and wisdom are relative; no doubt that Daniel understood many of the mysteries of the end of the world, but through a glass or through a shade, until the knowledge is revealed to the believers.

❖ When the end will come, the evil will not understand, while the wise men with God's doctrines will be able to understand. Wisdom will never be revealed to a deviated person or to someone who submits to the desires of the flesh[1].

St. Jerome

"***And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days***" (11-12).

The period in those verses is defined by days and not by years, that is 1290 days, which is three and a half years, when the church will suffer from the great tribulation. Forty-five days are added to make the number 1335 days. This is probably the lapse of time between the killing of the antichrist and the coming of the Lord Jesus. It is a period of rest so that those who deviated because of the antichrist may repent. In the same time, it is a period of purification for the believers when they joyfully await the coming of the Lord after the antichrist is gone. That is why Daniel praises those who wait for the 1335 days.

St. Jerome said: [It is obvious that the three and a half years is the period of the rule of the antichrist, when he will persecute the saints before he falls on the holy mountain. Thus the fulfillment of the prophecy about the 1290 days, or the three and a half years, will begin with the abolishing of the "*Endelekismos*," that is the permanent sacrifice, and will end with the death of the antichrist. It is the period during which the antichrist rules the world and forbids the worship of God [2].]

❖ He who waits 45 days after the suffering of the 1290 days, is praised, for he will see the Lord Himself coming in His glory. The reason for the waiting period of those 45 days after the murder of the antichrist is beyond our comprehension, only God knows about it. One would think judging the saints is postponed to test their faith[3].

St. Jerome

"***But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days***" (13).

At last, Daniel was asked to rest until the coming of the Lord who says, "*Behold, I am coming quickly*" (Rev 22: 12).

St. Jerome said: [It is obvious that this prophecy pertains to the resurrection of the dead, when the prophet will also rise[4].]

In the sixteenth century, John Calvin said that some interpreters added the two numbers together (1290 + 1335). and the result was approximately 2600 years. Since this interpretation was in the year 600 BC, then they concluded that the coming of the Lord

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[1] *PL 25:728 A-B.*
[2] *PL 25:729.*
[3] *PL 25:730.*
[4] *PL 25:730 B.*

and the end of the world will be 2000 years after His first coming. However, Calvin refuted this interpretation[1].

Some scholars commented on the saying of the Lord Jesus in the parable of the "Good Samaritan": *"On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay You.'"* (Luke 10: 35). They expressed this symbolic interpretation that the Lord Jesus had entrusted the injured souls of this world into the hands of the struggling church for a period of 2000 years, for one day is like a thousand years in the eyes of the Lord. The two denarii represent two thousand years after the ministry of the Lord Jesus that is to say that the Lord Jesus will come again to the inn at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Bishop Dioscorus presented a research on the book of Daniel. In his research he revealed that the end of the world is at hand. Also, many scholars in the West supported this opinion. Some scientists find that the hole in the ozone layer is getting bigger, which caused some glaciers to move in the region of Antarctica for a distance of three kilometers. This movement will be the reason for the magnetic imbalance of the globe, which will cause strong earthquakes, and volcanoes, which in turn will be the cause of the destruction of the whole world, only few years after the year 2000.

People from the East as well as from the West supported these opinions, while others opposed them. However no doubt, that when the antichrist comes, the believers will discover that what was stated in the Book of Daniel was crystal clear to the righteous people. Since the establishment of the early church of the New Testament, it has been realized that the time of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus is very clear and distinct.

I want to emphasize here that since the Lord's ascension to heaven, the church is joyfully awaiting the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. He is definitely coming, and is coming quickly. Therefore, we should be neither negligent nor slothful. The Lord Jesus Christ has revealed to us the signs of His Second Coming, so we may be ready with patience to face the difficulties, especially the great tribulation and the abomination of the desolation. We should also be ready with joy and hope that we have a share in the fatherly bosom. Some people look at the Second Coming of the Lord with great pessimism, which make them negligent in assuming their responsibilities. This is a sign of weak faith and that the heart is not kindled with the heavenly thoughts of the life to come.

He is definitely coming! Time will pass quickly and we will rejoice in our resurrection from the dead and in our meeting with Him on the clouds!

[1] *John Calvin: A Commentary on Daniel, Oxford 1986,. p. 392.*

FROM THE INSPIRATION OF DANIEL (12)

YES, MAY THE TIMES END!

- For our sake, You created time so we may glorify You.
  And for our sake, time will end so we may be glorified eternally with You.
  Yes, may the times end and may You come to us, our Beloved Lord, or may Your Holy Spirit carry us to You.
  We want to meet You very quickly!
- May You lift our hearts so we may see You coming to our inner depths.
  And may we see ourselves crossing to You to enjoy Your Company!