

LECTURES
ON
The Book of Daniel,
With Expository Notes on
"The Times of the Gentiles"
And Prophetic Subjects.

BY
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PREFACE.

THE following pages contain the substance of a Series of Lectures on *The Book of Daniel the Prophet*, given on successive Thursday evenings of three Winter months, which had been preceded by an Autumn of happy Gospel work, in which a number were brought to the Lord. Secular events shortly followed, which turned the thoughts of Christians generally to certain predictions of the Scriptures, which some who occupied the place of instructors of the people asserted were then being fulfilled. The ever-watchful enemy, taking advantage of the interest thus awakened, became exceedingly busy in his favourite occupation of sowing the errors of Christadelphianism, Anglo-Israelism, and kindred corruptions of the Truth, with the view of leading astray those who were unestablished in "the faith once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3, R.V.). Believing in the ability of the Word of God to defend itself against every form of error, and in its all-sufficiency to confirm the souls of all who learn and bow to its teaching, thereby preserving them from the snares of error, it was considered to be in season that some simple, clear and definite ministry on the chief events of the prophetic Word, as given in *The Book of Daniel* in the Old Testament Scriptures, and in *The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ* in the New Testament, should be given, suited to the need and the capabilities of these young Christians, and of some others who, although longer in Christ, were only awakening to the value and the use of the "sure Word of prophecy," which, as the Apostle tells us, is given to be used by us as "a lamp shining in a dark place," whereunto we "do well to take heed, until the day dawn" (2 Pet. i. 19, 20, R.V.).

The results—through the Divine blessing on the Word—were abundantly satisfactory, for the enemy was foiled in his attempt, and the saints were confirmed in their faith.

The present European War, with its impending changes among the Nations, is again turning the thoughts of many Christians toward the Prophetic Word, and likewise stirring into fresh activity the propagators of "divers and strange doctrines," which "over-

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throw the faith" of those that receive them, and lead them from the path of true discipleship to the living Lord who controls His servants by His Word. The time, therefore, seems opportune for some simple ministry of the Word on these subjects.

It is with a sincere desire to lead all who are exercised in these things to the Sacred Word, to search and examine it for themselves in the Divine presence, that the present small Volume, containing the above-named Lectures—taken, when given, by a beloved brother now at home with the Lord, and here somewhat extended—is now issued.

The "Notes" at the end are chiefly answers to questions handed in, expressing common difficulties of the hearers, which were dealt with together on the last evening of the meetings. May the Lord be pleased to use what is thus sent forth in His Name, for the comfort and blessing of His own people, and to open the eyes of others who are still in and of "the present evil age," to see the future of the unregenerate world as it is presented by the unerring hand of the Spirit in "the sure Word of Prophecy!"

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Introduction.

THE Book of Daniel is one of the principal parts of the Sacred Word, in which God has given us what information He has considered it good for us to possess concerning the future of the world. Its main subject is the history of those nations which, in the appointment of God, are to rule in the earth during the period of Israel's chastisement and scattering, and the degradation of Jerusalem as the city of God's choice and the centre of His government on the earth. It is not occupied with the history of *all* nations, but only with that of the great empires which were successively to have dominion in the earth, during that period which our Lord called "the Times of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi. 24). These "times," or epochs, began with the transfer of rule from the kings of God's chosen people Israel, to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and they will continue until the personal return of the Lord Jesus to earth to set up His millennial kingdom. Prophecy is history written in advance, and its use to the people of God is to be as "a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawn" (2 Pet. i. 19, R.V.) This dark or squalid place is the world, through which, in this period of the Lord's rejection on earth and exaltation in heaven, the Christian, severed from the present evil age by the Cross (Gal. i. 4), and united to Christ in heaven by the Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 13), now threads his way as a stranger and pilgrim (1 Pet. ii. 11), guided by the light of that Word (Psa. cxix. 105). He does not therefore need to be in

doubt as to what his path is, nor is he at the mercy of the world's soothsayers and false prophets regarding the future of the nations. God has fore-written all that He sees necessary for His people to know, and they will be wise indeed if they receive and use this knowledge for the purpose that God has given it.

The character, the course, and the crisis of Gentile dominion on earth is here traced by God's unerring foreknowledge of events. The history of such individuals and peoples as are brought into immediate contact with the covenant people are noted, and its attitude and action toward some of Jehovah's witnesses is recorded, all for our instruction and warning.

The Authenticity of the Book.

No Book of Holy Scripture has been so long or so virulently attacked, as to its authenticity, as the Book of Daniel. It has been in "The Critic's Den" for nearly 2000 years. Heathen philosophers, learned infidels, and professed Christian ministers have each had their dissecting knives at work upon it. In the third century, Porphyry, a Syrian who assailed Christianity, asserted it was a forgery, written in the time of the Maccabees, over three centuries after Daniel lived. Wellhausen, and other German supercritics, with their English disciples, Dean Farrar, Professor Driver, and many lesser lights, aver that the Book was written by some "gifted and pious Jew," after the earlier predictions in it had been fulfilled—a pious fraud, which critics of this school seem to condone, and use the prophecies as "legends" from which to teach "moral lessons." But it must not be accepted as the writing of the Holy Ghost by the hand of Daniel, for that would necessitate the acceptance of it as Divine prophecy—and according to German Neologists and their disciples, there is no such

thing as fore-telling that which is yet to come. Our firm and full conviction is, that the Book of Daniel was written by an actual prophet of God of that name, who lived during the seventy years' captivity of Judah in Babylon; that it was written by him under the direct inspiration of the Spirit (2 Pet. i. 21); that it is entirely free from error, and to be regarded and received by us as the very "Word of God," and an integral part of "the Scripture"—a term used for the collected sacred writings—which "cannot be broken" (John x. 35). To the simple Christian, the fact that the Lord Jesus quoted the very words of this Book as a prophecy applicable to Himself, and used them when He stood before the high priest and the council, saying, "Hereafter ye shall see the *Son of Man* sitting on the right hand of power, and *coming in the clouds of heaven*" (Matt. xxvii. 64, compare with Daniel vii. 13), and that they charged him with blasphemy for so doing, is clear proof that the Lord and the Jewish Sanhedrin alike admitted the authenticity of this Book. And when the Lord Himself in the most emphatic manner declares the writer of it to be "Daniel the prophet" (Matt. xxiv. 15), (see Dan. viii. 11, xii. 11), and the Holy Spirit refers to it (2 Thess. ii. 3), and its writer (Héb. xi. 33), there is surely an end of all controversy, unless it be continued by answering with the latest deniers of the Lord's Deity, that He having "emptied Himself" of His Divine attributes, knew no more than the people of His time, and therefore accepted the Jewish legends as His Father's Word. But those who have reached this depth of unbelief have forfeited all claim to be regarded as Christians, for they have denied the Son of God, and the Apostle tells us that "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 John ii. 23, R.V.). So that their words are to be regarded as those of avowed unbelievers.

The Language of the Book.

Another remarkable fact is the language in which the Book of Daniel is written. As most are aware, the greater part of the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew. But there are *three* parts written in the Chaldee or Aramaic language, the language of the great eastern empires which were to rule over the Gentiles. These portions are a single verse in Jeremiah's prophecy (chapter x. 11), two short portions in Ezra (chapters iv. 8 to vi. 19, and chapter vii. 12-27), and Daniel, chapter ii. 4 to vii. 28. The rest of the Book is in Hebrew. Has this any meaning? Undoubtedly it has. The parts that are written in the language of the Gentiles is a record of their own history and their judgment, so that they may read both, and be without excuse before God, when that judgment comes.

The Personal Life of Daniel.

There is more detail given concerning the personal life and testimony of Daniel than of any other prophet. From that sad day when as a youth he was carried captive from Jerusalem to Babylon, through some sixty years of godly life and unblemished testimony in heathen courts and in king's palaces, in lowly and in exalted places, amid true friends and implacable foes, in cruel dishonour and royal dignity, he went on his way with God, cleaving to His Word, honouring His Name, standing firm as a rock for His truth: one of the few of God's saints against whose name no failure is charged, no false step or stumbling recorded, a man "beloved of God" (chapter x. 19), whose life was without fault before man (chapter vi. 4), whose faith is honoured with a place among the worthies of the kingdom in Heaven's great National Gallery of Heb. xi., and who passes off the scene at a ripe old age to his "rest,"

yet to appear in the great circle of the redeemed of all the ages, risen and glorified to "stand in his lot at the end of the days."

The Value and Use of Prophecy.

May the Lord give us understanding in His Word as we go through the chapters of this great prophetic and intensely practical Book. It is not so much great capacities to deal with mysteries that are needed to read aright and learn the truth of the prophetic Word as personal devotedness and practical separation from the world, to walk with God. Prophetic revelation and utterance have from the beginning been closely connected with a walk in fellowship with God, at times when general departure and apostasy had drawn the greater number from the path of separation and testimony for God. Enoch, who was the *first* to prophesy of coming judgment (Jude 14), was a walker with God amid the last days of antedeluvian wickedness, and John the Beloved, who is the *last* to prophesy of "things which are to be hereafter," was an exile for the Word of God in Patmos, a lone isle of the Egæan Sea, far from that world whose doom he was commissioned to write. And "the secret of the Lord" is still "with them that fear Him," and to them "He will shew His covenant" (Psa. xxv. 14); while unto the saint who mixes Himself with the world's politics or its religion, all these things will be more or less of an enigma. To the many who regard their personal salvation as the chief end of Christianity, and to "get to heaven at last" the climax of their hope, these things will have little interest. But to the child of God who has been taught by the Spirit to pray aright, "Thy kingdom come," and to expect the answer to that prayer in God's appointed way, "the sure Word of prophecy" will be as a beacon light to

warn him of the rocks that are not far off, and it will likewise serve as a "lamp" whose clear shining will point out his way as he journeys through the land of the shadow of death, in which his Lord was rejected, toward that heavenly country upon which his heart has long been set, and toward which the eye of hope is ever upward turned, "looking for that Blessed Hope"—the personal return of the Lord from heaven.

Chapter I.

The Conquest of Jerusalem and Captivity of Judah in Babylon.

THE Book opens with a brief statement of the siege of Jerusalem, the chosen city where Jehovah had placed His Name, in which His temple stood, "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth" (Psa. xlviii. 2), in the days of her glory, whither the tribes went up, "the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel" (Psa. cxxii. 4). But, alas! she had proved herself unfaithful, and the crown of her glory and beauty was about to be struck from her brow. It is a solemn thing to be entrusted with Divine privileges, and to whom "much is given," of all such much will be required. And where God's claims are disowned, and Himself dishonoured, great must be the punishment. It was of this chosen and highly favoured people, "the whole family" whom Jehovah had "brought up out of the land of Egypt," that He commanded the prophet write, "You *only* have I known of all the families of the earth: THEREFORE I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos iii. 2). And this punishing was to be here and now. It has no reference to that future punishment for which the unjust are reserved "unto the day of judgment" (2 Pet. ii. 9). The analogy is the present chastisement (Heb. xii. 7) of God's people, which may be in present loss of stewardship because of unfaithfulness (see Luke xvi. 1), in wasting their Master's property or His honour, committed to their

trust ; in their loss of a place of testimony and fruitfulness (John xv. 4), or of health, or even of life itself, all of which come upon them *now* as *sons*, while at their manifestation before the judgment seat hereafter, it will affect them as *servants*, in eternal loss or gain. If this were better understood, it would lead to deeper heart-searching before God than generally exists in times of sifting in God's fan, and on occasions of fiery trial in His furnace. And this deliverance of the chosen city into the hand of the Gentile spoiler was not the first of God's chastisements of His chosen people. Lesser judgments had preceded it, to which, had they hearkened, they would have been spared this greater one. The forty years' wanderings in the desert because of unbelief ; the giving of Saul to be king in response to their demand to be "like the nations" ; the rending of the kingdom after a brief period of prosperity under David and Solomon, because of sins unjudged and flagrant disobedience to the Word of God unrepented of ; the captivity of the ten tribes in Assyria, followed by the peopling of their land by the heathen, were all visitations of God upon His people because of their dishonour of His Name. Now after a period of extended patience by Jehovah, in which Hezekiah and Josiah had His approval because of their return by way of His Word to the cleansing of His temple and the restoration of His worship according as it was written in "the Book," the last dread stroke falls upon the chosen people and city because they had "mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy" (2 Chron. xxxvi. 16). First, the son of Josiah was overcome by the king of Egypt and carried captive, his brother being appointed ruler in Jerusalem, as a vassal king, changing his name to Jehoiakim. In the third year of his reign,

Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up against Jerusalem and bound him in fetters, taking part of the temple vessels, and a number of hostages, among whom were Daniel and his companions. This was in 606 B.C., the beginning of the Seventy Years of Servitude. To this judgment the Jews who remained in the land refused to bow, and rebelled, which brought Nebuchadnezzar's army around Jerusalem a second time, capturing the city and deporting the king and all the "mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives," including Ezekiel the prophet, to Babylon, leaving only "the poorest sort of the people," among whom Jeremiah remained, warning them that continued disobedience to God would bring a still deeper judgment. This was the Captivity in 597 B.C. Ten years later, the Jews remaining in Jerusalem revolted again, and Nebuchadnezzar appeared the third and last time, utterly destroying the city and the temple, and laying the whole land desolate. This was "the Desolations" (Dan. ix. 2), and the end of rule in Israel. From then till now, no Jewish king has reigned in Jerusalem.

But although the sword of government was thus committed to the Gentile, "the glory," the sign of Jehovah's presence, did not accompany it. Ezekiel saw the cloud rise from its place between the cherubim and reluctantly leave "the house" (Ezek. ix. 3), and later, the city (xi. 23) to return to heaven. There it will remain until it returns to earth with Israel's King (Matt. xxiv. 30). No city on earth can claim the sanction or Name of Jehovah as Jerusalem, and no nation of the Gentiles has taken or ever will take the place of the covenant people, Israel. "Thou never barest rule over them; they were not called by Thy Name" (Isa. lxiii. 19).

But this condition is not to continue for ever. Jerusalem is to "be trodden down of the Gentiles until the

times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke xvi. 24). Then it will be restored to its place of sovereignty. "Jerusalem shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place" (Zech xiv. 10), "and the Lord shall set His throne in Zion and reign before His ancients gloriously" (Isa. xxiv. 23). But the long and chequered periods of these "times of the Gentiles" which began at this time have first to run their course, and it is with these that the prophetic parts of the Book of Daniel chiefly deal.

The First Great Gentile Ruler.

Nebuchadnezzar, glad to extend his dominions, and proud to be known as the conqueror of a people who, although smaller in number (Deut. vii. 6) than the nations around them, had been a terror to their enemies (Josh. ii. 9) because of the acknowledged presence and power of Jehovah their God in their midst, enters on his stewardship with no fear of God before his eyes, or sense of responsibility to wield the sceptre in a righteous manner, which had been put into his hands by God. Whether he knew it or not, the Divine decree was that he should be used by their offended God as a whip to chastise His rebellious people, and as such he, although a heathen, is expressly said by the prophet to be the "servant" of God. "Now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him. And all the nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his own land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him" (Jer. xxvii. 6-8 R.V.) The subsequent history of this remarkable man shows how this Word of God was fulfilled. When he had served the Divine purpose, he passed from the scene, and his glory and his kingdom went to another, who "served"

himself, as the prophet had predicted, when the time appointed by God for "his land" to become the scene of the Divine judgment had come. The committal of power to the hand of this first Gentile ruler, the self-interest and pride with which he used it to glorify himself and persecute God's true witnesses in his dominion, his personal exaltation, chastisement, fall and degradation to the level of the beasts of the field whom he was to rule over, with his repentance and restoration to acknowledge the God of heaven, tells the story of Gentile rule from its beginning to its close, a story throughout of opposition to God which will reach its crisis in its last ruler, the Prince that is yet to come, who will be Kaiser of the last Gentile empire of ten subordinate kingdoms, the open enemy of God and His Christ, the oppressor of the coming Israel and the supreme ruler of the Roman world, who will acknowledge him as their master, and worship him as their God.

Daniel and His Companions.

Among the captives carried away by Nebuchadnezzar from the city and land of Jehovah to Babylon with the conquered king Jehoiakim, were four royal youths of attractive personal appearance and good understanding, kinsmen of the good king Josiah. Like him, they seem to have been worshippers and servants of the God of Israel in early years, and had shared that season of reviving and godly restoration, which Jehovah in grace caused to come upon His people, as a gleam of sunshine in the evening of their dark and cloudy day. They were of the same spirit as their godly kinsman, true lovers of the Word, which happily for them had been hid in their hearts during the peaceful years of youth, while they dwelt in that Jerusalem in which Jehovah's Name was known and feared. Their sudden translation from these surroundings to a

heathen country, where their captors bade them in mirth, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion," must have been very keenly felt. The experiences of godly ones there are well described in Psalm cxxxvii., where by the streams of Babylon they sit and weep, with their harps hung on the willows, remembering Zion. Whether the vow not to "forget Jerusalem" was kept or otherwise we are not informed, for the captives as a whole disappear. Very likely they had become swamped in Babylon, conforming to the ways of the people among whom they dwelt. But the silver line of testimony is with Daniel and his companions.

In addition to the "strange land," in which they, in common with others, were exiles, it is told that the three princes were taken into the court of the king, that they might learn the language and study the literature of Chaldea, so as to be able to act as privy councillors and "wise men" in the court. They made no demur to this. There was nothing in the law of Jehovah against it: so they obeyed those in dominion over them. Here is a lesson for us all. If it be so required, there is nothing against a child of God acquiring the learning and sciences of the world, although such a path is increasingly beset with peculiar temptations, the power and subtilty of which has drawn many a Christian "student" away from God, and from the simplicity of "the ways that be in Christ." The sequel at least shews that it is possible to "abide with God" in such a calling, to retain there the unspotted garment, and maintain a spiritual freshness and uncompromised testimony such as God delights to own. We further read that their names were changed by their heathen master, and names taken from the idols of Chaldea were given to them. This, to a Jew, whose name was given him in connection with the peculiar place he was called to occupy in the economy of God, was a signal disgrace, and to a godly youth like

Daniel, it would be a keen and bitter trial. His name Daniel ("My God is Judge") was altered to Belteshazzar, which means, "Whom Bel favours;" and to his companions also the names of gods of the heathen were given. But we read of no resistance being made to this. They bowed to that over which they had no control. We need not fret if the world blots out or blackens our names, or daubs us with "nicknames" of its own. Sweet it is to observe that when Jehovah sends His messenger to the prophet, he addresses him, "O *Daniel*, a man greatly beloved." Hundreds of years later, when our Divine Lord referred to the subject of the prophet's testimony, he spoke of him by the honoured name of "*Daniel* the Prophet" (Matt. xxiv. 15). Thus we may learn that the names of God's faithful servants are safe in His keeping, no matter how the world may brand them, or blacken them.

But a temptation and a trial of quite another kind awaited the young prince and his companions in the Chaldean court—a temptation not affecting their personal honour and dignity, but the law of their God, and testing their faithfulness thereto.

By a decree of their royal master, they were commanded to be fed with dainties, and made to drink of such wine as was used by the king, and doubtless offered as drink-offerings to his gods. This was not a matter in which there could be any concession made, or compromise offered. The law of the Lord had forbidden the sons of Israel to eat or drink defiled Gentile food, or to have fellowship with demons, as such eating is deemed in the sight of God (Deut. xxxii. 17, 1 Cor. viii. 7). It is well to be clear as to this. So long as it was a personal matter, affecting their own names and honour, they allowed their "yieldingness" to be known to all men, and bowed their necks to the yoke. But when it became a matter of obed-

ience to God, and to His Word, or of submission to earthly rulers, then the claims of Jehovah must always be paramount, even should such obedience entail reproach and suffering.

There might have been many an excuse offered by Daniel and his companions, for not regarding the law of Jehovah as "binding" on this occasion. Their people were in captivity; their nation's glory was in the dust; disobedience had brought down the wrath of God upon them. They were far from Jerusalem, in a land where such strictness was never observed. Few, if any, now regarded the ancient custom as practicable, and they were where such abstinences were all unknown. And further still, a refusal to conform to the custom of the court, and to obey the king, might not only prevent their advance in royal favour, and hinder them rising to places of honour in the kingdom, but it might cost them life itself.

Such was the crisis to which Daniel and his companions were brought. It was a day of choosing, and we may truly say the decision and choice in this earliest recorded day of trial, yielded an abiding influence upon, and gave character to all their future course.

Although placed in different circumstances, and amid other surroundings, such testings are the lot of all God's true saints and servants. The day of trial comes sooner or later to every true saint of God. Then the true condition of the heart and spirit is made known. Happy it is, when through grace the trial is endured, and the saint comes out of it, "Stablished, strengthened, and settled" (1 Pet. v. 10).

The testimony of the Word as to how this time of crisis in the lives of these young men was met, is recorded in the glowing words, "But Daniel purposed *in his heart* that he would not defile himself." He was a true Nazarite

(Num. vi. 3-7), and his heart beat true to his God in that far-off land. The Word of the Lord, which He had learned in his youth, was dwelling richly in his heart (Col. iii. 16), and he with purpose of heart was cleaving unto the Lord (Acts xi. 23). This is the kind of Christian that is wanted in our time: not the jelly-fish man who comes and goes, and suits himself to the conditions around, seeking to please everybody, and gain favour with men of the world at the cost of dishonouring God; but men of a purposed heart, who will set the Lord always before them, no matter where they are, and own the claims of the Word of God everywhere and always. It was well for Daniel that he had a good grip of that Word, and that it had a firm hold on him before the hour of testing came, and that he had learned to stand like the brave, firm and fearless, no matter what others might do. It is easy to sing, "Dare to be a Daniel," but it needs close acquaintance with God and a right condition of soul to do it, when the hour of testing comes. Daniel made his choice: he would be true to God at all costs, whatever the results might be. Good it was for him that in this *first* recorded trial he stood firm, for it was no doubt the event which was to give colour and character to his whole course. Had he yielded or compromised, there would have been little more heard of him. It is of great importance to the young believer to have this "purposed heart," to be true to God and Christ and the truth. Fickle and fearful souls are an easy prey to the threats of men, but those who are fixed in heart and true to what they know of God's will, always make their mark.

Another aspect of the character of this young witness for God comes into view in the manner this decision was made known to Melzar, his master according to the flesh. He "requested" that he "might not defile himself." This was truly beautiful. He made no ostentation in declaring

his "faithfulness," nor was there any declamation against the idolatry that surrounded him. It would have been "out of season" on Daniel's part to have cited the facts of his nation's special testimony against the gods of the heathen at such a time. He simply "requested" exemption as a favour, taking the lowly place of one in subjection to the "powers" (Rom. xiii. 1). What was the result? God intervened on his behalf. "Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs" (verse 9). The hearts of all men are in God's hand, and He is able to turn them as He willeth. And there is an old word little heeded in our time, which says, "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. xvi. 7). Yes, blessed be His Name, He still works on behalf of those who seek to do the thing that pleaseth Him, and many since Daniel's time have proved their God to be "a very present help" (Psa. xli. 1) in time of trouble. When we leave room for God to act, He never fails; but when we take our case out of His hands and begin to carve for ourselves, we always cut our fingers and get into trouble. The ten days' trial of a diet of simple fare, gave God a further opportunity of shewing His hand, and the four young princes were declared to be the fittest of the school, when examination day came. Faithfulness to God even in the little details of life, never fails to bring its blessing. May we not learn from this that the believer who feeds on the things of God as they are presented in the Word, and drinks of the fresh and flowing stream of living water (John vii. 37); who feeds on Christ and drinks of the Spirit, will manifest the results in a Christ-like life, and even the world will have knowledge of him that he "has been with Jesus"? But while these young godly exiles had no place of power in the court of the king, God gave them some-

thing better. "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom." So that when the period of their education had come to an end, and they were brought in before the king for their final examination, they all came out at the top. For we are told "the king found them ten times better" than all the wise men in his realm. This was to their credit, and it tells that they were diligent in their daily duties, as well as faithful to their God. Happy it is when these are found in combination, and when the Christian who stands firm and fast for the truth of God "adorns the doctrine" (Titus ii. 10) by a life and walk which commends it to others.

Chapter II.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream, and Daniel's Interpretation thereof.

THE first chapter opened with a view of the Chaldean king at *war: here he is seen at rest. It is the second year of his reign, and he has the spoils of his conquests all around him. Vessels from Jehovah's temple are in his idol houses, and princes of Judah are among his counsellors. All is just as a man of the world would have it. His pleasure is being served with the trophies furnished by the lands he has conquered. His dominion has been vastly increased: still, he is not satisfied. Is it that, like one who had reigned as "king in Jerusalem" (Eccl. i. 1) in years of great prosperity, the thought had pressed itself on his soul and disturbed him, that he shall one day "have to leave it all to the man" that should come after him (Eccl. ii. 18).

Before he went to sleep one night, his thoughts, we are told, had turned to "what should come to pass hereafter" (verse 29). This is what troubles the man of the world at times. How is the present life to end? What is to be hereafter? And with these thoughts filling his mind he sleeps, and in his sleep God speaks to him. This, as Job xxxiii. 15 tells us, was one of God's ancient modes of communication with mankind, before His Word had been completed as now it is. But in the morning the dream had gone, leaving only its shadow to scare and trouble him. And so it often is with the man of the world who

knows not God. He has his fears and forebodings regarding the future, which the wisdom of the world can neither answer nor allay. The wise men of Babylon are baffled: they have to confess their inability to tell their royal master his forgotten dream, and they add that such wisdom is only with "the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh"; it must come from another world. This limit of their boasted wisdom so aroused the anger of the troubled autocrat, that in his fury he sentenced them all to immediate death, and sent Arioch, his executioner, to have the thing done without mercy. Such is man! Government had been committed to this great Gentile, as in earlier times it had been committed to Noah, who early shewed his inability to use it, by failing to rule his own appetites (Gen. ix. 2, 21). Here the man who had received authority from God to rule over His covenant people is seen to be unfit to control himself. But when man comes to the end of his resources, then God reveals His hidden wisdom (1 Cor. i. 19-24), just as when the sinner renounces his righteousness (Rom. x. 3), God brings forth His own and invests him with it (Phil. iii. 9).

This gives opportunity for Daniel to step into the breach. On an earlier day in ancient Egypt, when its resources of wisdom had failed, a hidden, youthful son of Israel from one of its prisons had read the dream of Pharaoh, and solved his doubts (Gen. xli. 8-36). Now a captive of the royal tribe will become the teller and interpreter of Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream, for "the secret of the Lord" is ever "with them that fear Him."

A Remarkable Prayer Meeting.

Daniel appears before the angry monarch, and wisely asks for time; then he will make known the king's dream, and its interpretation. Such is his confidence, although

at the moment he knows no more about it than the rest. But he knows God, and his confidence is in Him regarding it. This was faith—faith in exercise towards God in an hour of supreme trial, involving his own life and that of his fellows. Such faith is bold, and rises to the occasion. Reaching his house, he makes the thing known to his three companions, and the four of them get to their knees to deal with God about it. It is evident that they were no novices in this holy exercise. They had doubtless proved their faithful God “a very present help in trouble” before. So they set themselves to “desire mercies of the God of heaven,” in that hour of need, and their cry entered His holy ear. To Daniel, the answer came in a vision of the night. Blessed be God, He is still the God who hears His people’s call in the day of their trouble, and He delivers them (Psa. l. 1). Do we always “glorify” Him when that deliverance comes, or do we take the credit of it to ourselves? In Daniel we have a fine example of how “thanksgiving” should follow answered “prayer and supplication” (Phil. iv. 6). Before saying a word to Arioch, he raises his song of praise to God (verses 19-23), and a noble and lofty ascription of worship as well as thanksgiving it truly is. Everything is ascribed to God: Daniel is nobody and nowhere. This is the kind of man that God can use. He is a vessel ready for the Master’s use. Most of us are so full of self and self-glory that God can do nothing with us.

Now he is ready to go again before the king, and here again he is careful to make it clear that it is to God, and not to him, that all the glory is due. He is not ashamed to own, in the presence of the great Chaldean, his acquaintance with a “God in heaven who revealeth secrets” (verse 28). He is anxious for him to know what his God is able to do, and he puts himself out of sight altogether. Then

he proceeds to tell the wondering king with authority and certainty what "shall come to pass hereafter."

The Great Image.

In the words recorded in verses 31-35, the king hears what brings back to his memory the dream of that never to be forgotten night, and immediately after, its full interpretation is given. It is a remarkable message of history written by the finger of God in advance—a fact which those who disbelieve in the supernatural have striven hard to deny, but which is so plainly and evidentially set forth, that it is harder to get rid of than to believe. To the man of faith who takes God's Word as His guide, it is the "sure word of prophecy," which, although it yields no information to him regarding his heavenly calling or his heavenly hope—both of which were unheard of, and "hid in God" until the appointed time had come for their revelation (Eph. iii. 2, 1 Cor. xv. 51)—yet gives him God's own pre-written history of the times in which he lives, and is to be to him as a "light shining in a dark place," which the present world truly is, to the heaven-born and heaven-bound saint.

In verses 31-35 we have the words recorded in which the young prophet made known to the king his dream. They are as follows:—"Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine *gold*, his breast and his arms of *silver*, his belly and his thighs of *brass*, his legs of *iron*, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to

pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." In the interpretation which immediately follows, this great image in the form of "a man" is shewn to represent the whole system of government in the earth, throughout "man's day" (1 Cor. iv. 3 marg.) which will continue until the Lord Himself assumes the government of the world, and reigns as its rightful King. Standing in majestic and terrible form, it looked down as in lordly pride, owning supremacy over the whole world. It represents the four great Empires that were in the purpose of God to exercise governmental power throughout "the times of the Gentiles." The various metals of which it was composed represent the character of that power as exercised by these four Empires which were to succeed each other as here described, in the government of the earth. The same Empires were shown in a vision to Daniel, as recorded in chapter vii., under the symbols of four fierce beasts devouring each other, until the last is given to "the burning flame." That which was seen by the man of the world as a majestic and glorious image in the form of a man, is viewed by the man of God as rapacious beasts, diverse from each other, rising out from the storm-tossed sea, opposing and devouring each other. Such is faith's view of all that is accounted great and glorious in the present world. Nebuchadnezzar was shewn in symbol the *governmental* power of these Empires, and the responsibility attaching thereto—a responsibility which man, as man, is capable of understanding, and which he will be judged for the use he makes of. But the true *character* and *actions* of such governments in their relation to God and His Truth is only seen and

apprehended by those who have divine life in them, and who are in communion with God. That which is symbolised in the metals of which the image is composed is governmental power as it has been committed by God to man; while that which is shewn to the prophet, under the symbols of wild beasts, is the misuse made of such power by ungodly men who exercise it.

The Metals and their Meaning.

The deterioration in value of the metals represented in the various parts of the image, tell how government in the hands of man was to degenerate from fine gold to iron, and to iron and clay. This is not the present-day popular conception of government. We are asked to believe that we live in an "age of progress," and that things are getting better; man is advancing; science is discovering things the writers of the Bible knew nothing of; and governments are becoming so wise and good that we are shortly to see the dawn of a "golden age." According to this, the image should have begun with the meaner metals, and ended with the fine gold. But God knows best, and by His pre-written history of its decline we will abide.

The Four Great Empires.

The four Empires which were to successively bear rule in the earth are plainly stated in the Word of God to be the Babylonian or Chaldean, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. This is important, and it attests the fact that in order to understand the symbolic teaching of Scripture, we have no need to go beyond the limit of the Scriptures themselves. No doubt there is much in secular history which is of interest to the Bible lover as bearing on the facts of Scripture, but all that is

needful for the establishment of our souls in the truth of God is found in the inspired Word itself. For as the Apostle tells us, by the diligent use of the God-breathed Scriptures the man of God is to be made "perfect" and "thoroughly furnished" (2 Tim. iii. 16-17). Man's histories are not God's Revelation, nor do we need their aid to assure us of the truth of God's Word. The Scriptures on many points confirm the records of the historian, but we do not read the records of men to assure us of the veracity of the Scriptures. They carry their own evidences to the soul, and "by faith we understand."

The *Babylonian* Empire as symbolised in the head of gold is described in Dan. ii. 37-38.

The *Medo-Persian* in the breast and arms of silver, in Dan. v. 28, and 2 Chron. xxxvi. 20, as that which was to *succeed* the former.

The *Grecian*, in the belly and thighs of brass, in Dan. viii. 20-21, xi. 2-4, as that which was to come after the Medo-Persian.

The *Roman*, in the legs of iron, which, although unnamed in the Old Testament—for it had not then appeared—is brought into prominence at the opening of the New Testament as bearing rule over "the whole world" (Luke ii. 1), and in its special relation to the land of Israel in detail (Luke iii. 1). No event of the past, therefore, that comes within the scope of this prophecy remains unfulfilled, and we may surely affirm that no event that is therein predicted will fail to be fulfilled. For whatever may happen in the ever-changing politics and governments of men, "the Word of God shall stand for ever."

The words, "Thou, O king, art this head of gold," are the prophet's application of the *golden* form of government to Nebuchadnezzar as head of the Babylonian or Chaldean Empire. "Thou, O king, art a king of kings, for the God

of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power and strength and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all" (verses 37-38). Such was the "golden" power conferred upon the first monarch of the Gentiles by the hand of God. His ruling authority was not derived from the people that he ruled over, but from God. He was responsible to God alone for the exercise of it, and the use he made of it. It was not gained by conquest, nor was it conferred by those beneath: it was bestowed "from above." This was what the Lord referred to in that hour when He stood before Pilate's judgment seat and heard him say, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power (authority) to release Thee?" to which the Son of God made answer, "Thou couldest have no power (authority) at all against Me, except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 10-11)—a fact which, if he knew it, Pilate, the Roman Governor, did not duly recognise.

Governmental power, in order to be exercised as God would have it, must be held and used under His direct control, in obedience to His Word, and for the good of its subjects. But Nebuchadnezzar did not so use the gift he had received. He did not use it to regulate his own conduct, nor to control his people. He used it to exalt himself, to dethrone God as the object of worship, and to persecute His people. Such has been man's misuse of God's gift throughout the whole course of Gentile dominion, and such it will continue to be to the end, as the Scriptures clearly teach us. Need we wonder that men fear what has been called "the Divine right of kings," and resent the claim? Yet such is indeed God's principle, and if one could be found who would use such power aright, who would seek only to know and to do the will

of God, using the authority he has received only for the good of others, giving no place to self-exaltation, but seeking only the blessing of his subjects, then nothing could be more beneficent than such *golden* power. But such a ruler has not, nor can be found among the sons of men. Blessed be God, there is One, but only One, who will hold and exercise such power for the glory of God and the blessing of men, and unto Him has already been committed from the hand of God "all authority in heaven and on earth." He has proved His competency to rule by His perfect obedience in the place of a Servant and of a Son down here. For it is only such as have learned to obey who can rule aright. And this the Lord Jesus has done, for He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Phil. ii. 8). And now, as exalted to the right hand of God, with "angels and principalities made subject to Him," and all heaven obedient to the rule of His hand, bearing the Name that is above every name, yet gentle and meek as in the days of His flesh below, He has proved Himself "worthy" to receive earth's dominion (Rev. v. 9). And when the appointed hour has come, He will take unto Himself His great power, and reign (Rev. xi. 10). Then, but not till then, will the world, so long harassed and bled by man's false dominion, learn that her blessing and her peace comes from "the Lamb upon the throne." Then "golden" power will be used as God would have it, and

"The crowns that have fallen from the false one's brow,
Shall be worn by earth's rightful Lord."

And while He shall have "dominion from sea to sea," and "all kings shall fall down and worship Him," yet no misuse of that supreme authority will be known, for "all nations shall serve Him," and "shall call Him blessed" (Psa. lxxii. 8-17). The long-sought-for time of peace and

prosperity will have come to the weary earth at last, and all will then be happy.

The *Second* kingdom represented in the breast and arms of silver is that of Medo-Persia. It came into existence when Darius the Mede "received the kingdom" in that fatal hour when the handwriting on the wall announced the kingdom of Chaldea as "numbered" and "finished," by the act of God, and "in that night was Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans slain" (Dan. v. 30). The *Medes were first in power, but the Persians, who gradually replaced them, ultimately became the supreme rulers, and their kings alone are named as exercising dominion (see chap. x. 1, Ezra i. 1), Cyrus the Persian having been named in the remarkable words of the prophet Isaiah, long before His birth (Isa. xliv. 28, xlv. 1).

The prophet's brief description of this second kingdom is that it was to be "inferior" to the Chaldean kingdom which preceded it. This is not to be understood regarding its territorial extent, for it seems to have exceeded that of its predecessor in this respect (see Esther i. 1), but rather in the character of its government. As silver is "inferior" in value to gold, so was the rule of the second Gentile kingdom as compared with that of the first. This we learn from the record of the Scripture itself; we have, therefore, no need to apply to the secular historian for the information. When Darius the king discovered the plot that had been devised against Daniel's life by the presidents and princes whom he had set over the kingdom to aid him in its government (Dan. vi. 1-7), he set his heart to extricate Daniel from their power, and laboured in vain until the setting of the sun to deliver him. These men had come to share his kingly power to such an extent that they were able to make a decree, and having got the king to sign it, to so hold him to its execution, that he could

not reverse it. Had Nebuchadnezzar, with his exercise of absolute power, been faced with such conditions, he would have consigned the perpetrators of the plot to the den of lions without consulting anybody, for "whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive" (chap. v. 19). But it was not so with the Persian. He had lost the "golden" power which was committed to the Chaldean, and there only remained that which was "inferior," as represented in the silver. This beginning of degeneracy in the character of his government became still more marked as it proceeded, for we learn from Esther i. 14, Ezra vii. 14, that the king had "princes" and "counsellors" associated with him in his rule, who were able not only to bind him by the "laws" of his realm, but to frustrate his authority at their will. Such was the first stage of the downward course of Gentile rule, which, as we shall see, has its culmination in utter democracy—the people ruling themselves by prescribing to those whom they set over them what they are to do, and how they are to do it.

The *Grecian* kingdom, as represented in the belly and thighs of brass, is simply named in the interpretation, but more fully explained in chap. viii. 20-21, where the first king of Grecia overcomes and succeeds the Persian power. This was Alexander the Great, whose rule was more of a military than a regal character, and who appointed his victorious *generals to places of rule in the countries subdued by them. This was a still further degeneracy, and was the cause of finally dividing his kingdom into four parts, as is stated in chap. viii. 22. The aristocracy and counsellors were able to hamper and hinder the king in the Persian form of rule, but in the Grecian, the military generals had it in their power to control everything, and this they eventually did, securing and partitioning the kingdom among themselves at their will.

The *Roman* Empire, represented in the legs and feet of iron, receives a fuller description than the three which precede it. The prophet's words regarding it are as follows:—"The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise" (ver. 40). Such was to be the character of the last of the four great Gentile Empires, which in its final form will be in existence in the hour of the final judgment of nations at the hand of the Lord. It was to reach its zenith by force, bruising and breaking all that opposed it. Its own end will be to be broken to pieces by the Stone falling upon it in judgment. From a small beginning as a republic, "the seven-hilled city" extended its influence, and went on subduing and conquering until it dominated the greater part of the civilised world, from the Clyde to the Indus, and took to itself the name of *Orbis Terrarum*. In B.C. 63, Pompey, the great Roman General, invaded Judea and took Jerusalem, and at the opening of New Testament history, we find the Roman power in the hands of Cæsar Augustus, who dominated "the whole world" (Luke ii. 2) as Emperor, while in Luke iii. 1, Pontius Pilate appears as "Governor," appointed by him over Judea, with the Roman tax collector exacting his dues, and his coin (Matt. xxii. 20-21) circulating in the land of Israel. The character of its rule is indicated in such incidents as that recorded in Luke xiii. 1, where Galilæans were massacred while at worship, and especially in the murder of the Son of God under Pontius Pilate, before whose judgment seat He witnessed "a good confession" (1 Tim. v. 13). And although nothing "worthy of death" was found in Him, yet he, the representative of the *iron* Empire, delivered Him to the Jews, signing the death-warrant for His crucifixion. And it was this same

Empire whose rulers persecuted and martyred the apostles of the Lord, gave the early Christians to the lions, and sought to exterminate Christianity from the earth. The "iron" power in Cæsar, like the "golden" in Nebuchadnezzar, was used against God from whom it came, and to destroy the subjects it was responsible to protect. Hence its judgment and its final doom. For although God bears long with His foes, when the day of His patience comes to its end, and the hour of His judgment has come, a "short work" He will make of them. "Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psa. ii. 9).

The Ten-fold Division.

The Roman Empire continued in its entirety for a period of some three hundred years, after which it became divided into its Eastern and Western parts, which division is represented in the *two* iron legs of the image. The Adriatic Sea forms roughly the dividing line, with five kingdoms on either side. These ten kingdoms existed in the past, and the fuller prophecies in chap. vii. 7-24, with Rev. xiii. 1, xvii. 3, make it clear that in the future there will be a revival and ten-fold division of the Roman Empire, corresponding to that which in Dan. ii. 42 is called "the toes of the feet." These will *re-appear shortly before the end, and it will be upon this form of the Empire that the final judgment of heaven will come.

The Iron and the Clay.

The deterioration of the metals from gold to iron symbolise the gradual decay of governmental power from that which is bestowed by God to that which is derived from men. This was manifested in the election of the Roman Emperors, who were mostly successful soldiers,

upon whom the title of *Imperator* was bestowed, first by the victorious army, and afterwards ratified by the Senate. The Emperors of Rome succeeded one another by this sort of election, rather than by hereditary title. It was the introduction of this democratic form of government that is symbolised by the "potter's clay," verse 41 (or "earthenware," as it is rendered by some)—a substance hard but brittle. This condition is said to be especially found in the feet and toes of the image; in other words, in its last condition, before its final judgment. Up to the point where this potter's clay, or earthenware, is introduced, there had been *deterioration* of power: now there is *adulteration*. The attempt is made to mingle the iron and the clay: but they do not cohere. As we read in verse 43, "they shall not cleave one to another." That which comes from above and that which is from beneath cannot intermix. In other words, men cannot be *governors* and at the same time be *governed*. Either God or man must be the source of power to rule: it cannot be found in both. The introduction of the "clay" has its answer in *democratic* government: rulers being elected by the votes of the people, who become more or less their masters. They must control their actions, for to them they owe their position. These man-elected legislators make their country's laws, and then get the king to sanction them. But if they put any law on the statute book which is displeasing to those who form their constituencies, they will in all likelihood be turned out of office at the next election. It is only because God has set a bound to the powers of man's will, beyond which he cannot pass, that anything like authority from Himself remains. But He has decreed that there shall be in it "the strength of the iron," right on to the end, so that although those who govern may pander to the demands of the common rabble

—like Pilate, on that day when the voice of the surging crowd prevailed, and caused him to do what his conscience condemned—yet they cannot wholly prevail in any country represented in the great image of our chapter. Monarchical rule will continue in all its parts to the end. This is witnessed by the “ten kings” who give their authority unto the Beast (Rev. xvii. 12-13). It is this partly iron, partly clay form of government that we have to-day in measure. No government can exist unless it can command the sympathy of a large majority of those whom it governs. If this fails, it is paralysed in its efforts to frame just laws, and must either yield to the popular demand or resign. And as the years advance, the “clay” will increase, and the “voice of the people” will essay to rule everything.

The countries which composed the ancient Roman Empire are no longer to be found in their entirety. Some have disappeared, others have been annexed and absorbed by greater nations, but we are taught to expect that they will re-appear in their ten-fold form shortly before the end. For the present, it would be more or less in the nature of a “guess” to say what these kingdoms will embrace. When the appointed time has come for their re-appearance, they will emerge from the present confusion. Some great countries, such as Russia and America, do not come within their scope at all. Others, like Germany, do in part—which points to her break-up and *dismemberment before the “time of the end.” And if we take the boundaries of the Roman Empire of the first centuries as the pattern of the one to come, then Ireland and the northern part of Scotland will be outside it also. But these are points upon which it is unwise to dogmatise at present. When the time is at hand, the vision will be open to all, and the fulfilment of the prophecy to the line and the letter. That which *is* clear from “the sure Word of prophecy” is, that

this fourth kingdom will be in existence in a ten kingdom form, and in direct opposition to God, at the time when the Son of Man comes in judgment.

The Coming Kingdom of God.

“In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (verse 44). These words very clearly and definitely inform us what is to come after the four Empires represented in the *image. It is a kingdom to be set up by “the God of heaven” The only questions which can arise in the mind are:—(1) By what means will this kingdom be introduced? and (2) Is its introduction in the past or in the future? Those who hold what is termed the *Historic* view, say it was begun over nineteen centuries ago, and is being continued and extended by the preaching of the Gospel, and the increase of civilisation. Those who hold the *Futurist*—and, as I judge, the Scriptural—view, believe this kingdom of God will be introduced by judgment. But let the Word inform us.

The Stone Smites the Image.

The crisis and end of Gentile rule is given in the following symbolic words:—“Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image on his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the

*It is reported that the Emperor of Germany, William II., addressing his troops on the battlefield in October, 1914, said:—“A new Empire shall arise, more splendid than the world ever saw—a new *Roman-German* Empire, which shall rule the world.” That this Utopian dream of human pride will not be realised is sure, for it flatly contradicts the prophecy of Dan. ii. 44, in which no room whatever is left for such an Empire.

gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (verses 34-35). And the prophet's interpretation of these words is:—"In the days of these kings, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (verse 44). The following points are worthy of note in this remarkable statement.

FIRST.—The end of Gentile rule as symbolised in the great image is to be a catastrophe. A stone falls upon the image when it is fully developed and crushes it to pieces; the whole of its constituents, from the gold to the clay, being pulverised, and carried by the wind as chaff, for which no place is found. This shows of what value God regards all the boasted power, and wealth, and glory of the kingdoms of the world, and what their moral worth is in the estimation of heaven: for as the first Psalm reminds us, "The ungodly . . . are like the chaff which the wind driveth away." May we learn from this the end of all man's empty show, and keep ourselves apart alike from the spirit and fashion of the world, which, like the shifting scenery of a stage, "passeth away" (1 Cor. vii. 31).

SECOND.—The stone first crushes the image, with one crash, then itself becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. This mountain is the symbol of the kingdom set up by the God of heaven, which is indestructible, and unlike the four Empires which preceded it, its sovereignty shall not pass to others. Judgment makes way for this kingdom, and its beginning is preceded by the complete destruction of the last form of Gentile rule. "The Stone"

is a well-known appellation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and here it can apply to no other. And it very obviously applies not to His coming in grace, but in judgment. For when He came as the Babe of Bethlehem, He smote no earthly power. The Roman Empire was not destroyed by His hand, but became the instrument of His death.

THIRD.—The kingdom which is set up by the God of heaven, and which ultimately fills the whole earth, is not a spiritual kingdom “set up in the hearts of men,” as some expositors would have us believe, or “a universal kingdom of Christ,” which is to gradually develope by means of the preaching of the Gospel, and the enlargement of the Church, which has been going on through the centuries, some dating its beginning at the birth of Christ, some at Pentecost, and a few at the reign of Constantine, when the Roman Empire adopted Christianity as its “religion,” and by the edict of the emperor became “the Christian world.” But the expression, “in the days of these kings,” limits the crisis of the image, by the falling of the stone, to the last division of the fourth Empire into ten kingdoms, which is yet future, and which will have its fulfilment in the coming of the Son of Man in judgment, as described in Matt. xxiv. 30, Rev. xix. 11.

The testimony of Scripture to the Lord in His relation to the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church (1 Cor. x. 32), is very full and clear. To the Jew, He was to be “for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both houses of Israel” (Isa. viii. 14). And it was of this that the Lord reminded the Jewish leaders when He said, “Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken,” which the Jews as a nation are, until this day, for as Peter said in Acts iv. 11, of the glorified Christ, “This is the Stone which was set at naught by you builders, which is become the Head of the corner.”

Having rejected their Messiah, they have fallen and been "broken," but in days yet to come they will as a people be restored in grace, to be reigned over by their once-rejected King in glory. But to the proud Gentile, who for over two and a half millenniums has defied God and misused the governmental power committed to his hand, the further word of the Lord applies, "but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matt. xxi. 44)—the judgment being full and final. The relation of the Church to the Lord Jesus does not come within the scope of Daniel's message—for the calling and character of the Church was a mystery "hid in God," of which the prophets of Old Testament time knew and wrote nothing (Eph. iii. 5). But in 1 Pet. ii. 4-5, the saints of the present age are said to have come to Christ "as unto a Living Stone," and upon Him are built up "a spiritual house," while in Eph. ii. 20-21 He is said to be the chief corner Stone of the Church, "in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." Clearly, then, the Christian and the Church stand distinct and apart alike from Jew and Gentile, and as God's *ecclesia*, "called out" from both, should have no part in the world's politics or its reforming schemes, which, as we know from this sure word of prophecy, are doomed to end in bitter failure, and be brought to Divine judgment. And thus it will be by a catastrophe of wrath, and not by a prolonged operation of grace that the kingdom of heaven will be set up on *earth.

The effect produced upon the great Gentile monarch, who had listened in silence to Daniel's recital and interpretation of his dream, is marvellous. He falls down before the captive youth, who has been God's messenger to his soul, and acknowledges God as supreme, exalting Daniel to a place of honour in the kingdom, and, at his

request, the three companions who had bowed the knee with him in prayer, share in his promotion: which may, as a foreshadowing type, point to the place of honourable service which, in days to come, some of the faithful in Israel shall share in declaring God's glory among the Gentiles (Isa. lxvi. 19). The times in which our lot is cast are full of great events, and there are many indications that "the day is approaching" (Heb. x. 25). Blessed it is to know that before a bolt of judgment falls from the now silent heavens, all who "are Christ's" shall be "caught up" to be for ever with the Lord, in that holy heaven from whence the judgment cometh.

Chapter III.

The Golden Image set up and Worshipped. The Faithful Three in the Fiery Furnace.

THE present chapter, and the three that follow it, are more concerned with the facts of history than with fresh revelations or prophecies. But like all the historic facts of the Bible, the events of these four chapters have their special message to the people of God. And the persons and actions that appear in them are typical and illustrative, given here by the Spirit of God in their development and order, to instruct us what the moral history of the times of the Gentiles, and of the men who exercise government during these epochs, really are, as God knows them. Man in his pride and vain-glory is here seen misusing the authority which has been committed to him, to turn men's thoughts away from God to the worship of an idol, and to give a fresh start, in circumstances of unparalleled greatness and splendour, to the worship of demons—which all idolatry, no matter under what name, really is (Deut. xxxii. 17 ; 1 Cor. x. 20).

In the last view of Nebuchadnezzar we had, in chap. ii. 47, he is ascribing great things to Daniel's God, confessing Him to be "a God of gods and a Lord of kings." Here, he uses his wealth to set up an idol of gold, and his power to compel his subjects to worship it. Such is man at his best, without God—a mere plaything of the devil, "driven" (Luke viii. 29) by him to one thing after another,

just as he wills. For although vain man delights to boast of his freedom (Psa. xii. 4) to do as he likes, he is the bondslave of sin (John viii. 34, R.V.), and the tool of Satan. And nothing short of deliverance by the Cross of Christ (Gal. i. 4) from the "course" in which, as a natural man, he began, and is energised by the devil (Eph. ii. 2), and translation into the kingdom of the Son of God (Col. i. 13), can set him on a higher plane, and give him new desires, with a new indwelling strength to turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thess. i. 9). Of this Nebuchadnezzar knew nothing. He is the old man of pride, and self-will, and vain-glory still. This is manifest in his action as here recorded.

In the vision which God had caused His servant Daniel to repeat and interpret to the king, he is represented as the *golden* head of the great image which represents Gentile government and in the crushing of the whole image by the falling stone, the end of that rule is most solemnly described. But instead of taking heed to the Divine warning, this man of pride sets himself to defy God by setting up a huge image ALL of gold, representing himself, and demanding that all his subjects worship it. There was cunning as well as wilfulness in this. He found himself at the head of a vast Empire, composed of many kingdoms, speaking different languages, having various religions. How were these to be kept in harmony, and governed by one head? If they can be got to embrace one religion, and worship one object, the unity of the vast Empire will be secured. For well the devil knows that a common religion, no matter what, is the strongest bond to unite elements that cannot be held together by any other means. So he suggests to Nebuchadnezzar idolatry—an image of himself. And the golden image on the plain of Dura, in the vicinity of his capital, is the grand result.

A great dedication service, with all the great men of the Empire, military and civil of all grades, are there present, with musicians in endless variety, each taking part to work up that frenzy so necessary to the worship of a lifeless idol. And to this great assembly the royal herald proclaims, in the king's name, that ALL shall fall down and worship before the idol, coupled with the threat that "whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (verse 6). The scene must have been "magnificent" in man's way of reckoning, and the thoughts of the wilful king, whose heart was lifted up with pride, would be as the prophet speaks of another king of Babylon, who said in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God" (Isa. xiv. 13).

The historic scene on the plain of Dura is but the foreshadow of a day yet to come, when he who is the last great enemy of God's Christ, as he is the devil's counterfeit of Israel's Messiah, shall set up his master's image (Rev. viii. 14-15), and demand that it be worshipped, under penalty of death. There was no place for neutrality in the day of the image on the plain of Dura, and there will be no place for it then. "The mark of the beast" will save all who receive it from death by the sword, but it will stamp its bearer as one to be hurled by God as an idolator into the lake of fire (Rev. xxi. 8).

A Test of Faithfulness to God.

Where were the Jews of the captivity in all this scene? Of the great mass of them we know nothing. Scripture is silent. Did they, like the seven thousand in Elijah's time, who refused to bow the knee to Baal, hide themselves in desert places until the day of trial was past? They may: but it was neither a loyal nor a noble part to play. Where

was Daniel in all this scene? Scripture is silent here again, but from what we know of the man with the "purposed heart," we may safely infer he was neither bowing before the idol nor hiding himself in cowardice. His office as "ruler over the whole province" (chap. ii. 49) may have taken him to some distant part of the realm on state-business, or the watching enemy may have considered it hopeless to get up a case against him. But the test was to be applied in all its severity to his three companions—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who had absented themselves and kept entirely separate from that scene of idolatry, or demon worship. And this made them marked men at once, for nothing will catch the world's eye and open its mouth in accusation more quickly, than separation from its great events. It will stand a good deal of reproof and put up with a large measure of "faithfulness" from those who patronise its devilry, and hob-nob with its false religion, but let a child of God "go forth without the camp," bearing Christ's reproach, standing wholly apart from its unholy alliances and its mixed congregations, and that man will be branded as a knave, or pitied as a fool. But he can well afford to "take it patiently," and not retaliate either in word or deed. He knows that his day is coming, and that "the righteous Judge," who will sit on His *Bema*, on that coming day of review and recompense will give to each the due reward of all that He has seen to be done and suffered for Him.

Jealous of the favour in which they stood with the king, a circle of informers appear before him, and, professing great zeal for his honour, accuse "certain Jews" whom he had "set over the affairs of the province of Babylon," with disloyalty to his person and disregard of his royal command. It was a fine testimony to the three faithful Hebrews when their accusers said, "they serve not thy

gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (verse 12). This aroused the great king's anger. His pride was evidently cut to the bone when he learned that three captive princes, whom he had elevated to places of trust, should thus set their God above him, and dare to "break the harmony" of all classes who had acknowledged the "State Religion." So he was filled with "rage and fury," and sending for the Hebrew youths, he gives them, as it were, another chance, which, if they put from them, will be followed without delay in their "being cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." And to crown the impious threat, and discover the root of all his rage, he blasphemously adds, "and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (verse 15). Alas, for the man who had confessed the God of Daniel to be a "God of gods and a Lord of kings"! He has yet to learn, as every proud sinner assuredly shall, that "those that walk in pride He is able to abase" (chap. iv. 37).

A Noble Answer.

In striking contrast to the angry king, the three faithful Hebrew princes, who, in an earlier day of testimony (chap. i. 12-17) had taken the Word of God as their counsellor, and kept the faith, proving God's faithfulness in making a way for them to do what they had purposed in their hearts, and in giving them wisdom to act in the crisis which had come upon them, now stand calm and confident in the presence of the man who had life and death in his power (chap. v. 19), and give a clear-ring answer to his threat. They evidently have no fears regarding the issue. Their cause, they know, is safe in the hands of the God whom they love and serve. They speak with becoming modesty, yet with a decision that is magnificent. They say, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter"—it had not

come upon them unawares: they had counted the cost! "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." They were confident of that: they had proved the might and the favour of their God. But whether it was to be His way to deliver them *from* the burning flame, or to preserve them *in* it, they did not know, therefore they add to their testimony these thrilling words, "but if not"—that is, if it be not the will and way of God to keep us out of the furnace, this is our decision all the same—"be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up" (verse 18). That was a noble answer indeed. There is no hesitancy, no shirking, no beating about the bush: it goes straight to the mark, and there is no possibility of mistaking its meaning. Such faith's answer ever is. It will not compromise God's claims; it stands on and for His truth, and leaves the results of its decision in His hands. Come life, or come death, it will stand on the Lord's side. Would that it were always so with all God's people, in the hour of the fiery trial of their faith! But the enemy is wily, and the flesh is ever ready to surrender at his call, and a compromise may save the situation, and offer a solution of the difficulty. Then, of course, God will have no room to show His hand, and there will be no need for His intervention. This is the fashionable way, and, as men reckon, the "more excellent way" to overcome difficulties. Our fathers, the martyrs, and those who left all for the Truth's sake, were no doubt well meaning, but they were "too rigid," and by sticking unyieldingly to points which, after all, are only of secondary importance, they brought on themselves troubles which might have been escaped had there been more charity and less dogmatism. Such are the sentiments which pervade the times

in which we live, and they find acceptance with very many. A decisive and definite testimony to God's claims, to Christ's Lordship, and the abiding authority of the Scriptures, with all that they contain, are regarded as out-of-date; and those who make them, far behind the times. Well, so be it. Let the stigma cleave to us. It is a joy to bear it, and ten thousand times more honourable than a guilty compromise of that which is not our's, but God's, for the sake of ease, and to avoid that tribulation which the Lord told His disciples must be their lot while in the world, and faithful to Him (John xvi. 33). Whatever the rest of the captives of Jerusalem and Judah did in that day of testimony, when the claim of Jehovah as the only true God and the one object of worship (Deut. vi 4, 13, 14) was in question, the record of these three who "loved not their lives unto death," is preserved by the Spirit on the page of inspiration for the encouragement of saints in all ages to be "stedfast, unmovable," true to God and His truth at all costs, leaving Him to act on their behalf and make a path for them in the trial, or give them grace to endure it, which, in His own time and manner, He never fails to do, whether life or death be the immediate result.

The Triumph of Faith.

Baffled by faith's triumphant answer, and galled at his authority being flouted in such a bold and public manner, the enraged king gives command to the great men of his staff to seize and bind the three faithful witnesses as they stood, and in urgent haste cast them into the seven times heated furnace, the roaring flame of which was so vehement that it slew the men who obeyed the royal command. And what of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego? The king himself shall tell us. Looking toward the furnace of fire, he speaks aloud, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in

the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (verse 25). They had lost their bonds, but nothing else, and they had gained a companion. And when they were brought out, not a hair of their heads was singed, nor was the smell of fire on them or their garments. The secret of the miracle was simply this: God had fulfilled His promise, upon which His servants had reposed in faith. For theirs was no blind credulity, no "leap in the dark." There was an ancient promise which they had doubtless often read, and upon it, in the hour of faith's severe trial, they had rested. It was this—"When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou *walkest* through the fire *thou shalt not be burned*; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. xlii. 2). And God, who delights to honour faith in His Word, gave all that He promised in preservation, and the manifested companionship of One whose form the heathen monarch described as being "like the Son of God." The fire is the emblem of faith's trial (1 Pet. i. 7; iv. 12) no matter how it comes. It is in such conditions that the bonds which hinder true service and free obedience to God, are burnt off the saints of God, and the image of Christ, which all who are born of God and created anew (Eph. iv. 24; Col. i. 10) possess, is developed. Such "fiery trial" was common enough to saints of early times, and we read of it in the times of the Waldenses and the Covenanters, but in our own times there is little of it. Pagan and Papal Rome have both persecuted the saints, and we know from the Word of God that there is a more awful time of tribulation yet to come upon those who will become true servants and witnesses for God in that terrible hour when Israel must endure her fiery trial, and know the bitterness of having welcomed and entered into alliance

with a false Messiah. But some, in whose hearts grace has brought repentance, will worship the true God, and "glorify Him in the fires" (Isa. xxiv. 15) through which God will bring them "purified" for blessing in the earth (Zech. xiii. 9).

The effect upon the king was wonderful. He acknowledged the deliverance of the three Hebrews, whom he designated as God's servants "that trusted in Him," and confessed that they had set aside the king's word in order to obey and worship their own God. And in a royal decree he makes it known that if any henceforth speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, utter destruction shall be their doom. Surely God is in all this wonderful story, working, sometimes secretly, at the right moment openly, on behalf of His own. For as in chapter i. He gives them of His *wisdom* to deliver from the impending death sentence, so now He *exercises His power* on their behalf to bring them through it.

Chapter IV.

Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream: The Great Tree. The King's Mania and Conversion.

THIS chapter continues the historic form of teaching. Nebuchadnezzar, the great king, is here seen in person and in figure—as a man, and as the representative of Gentile rule in its present proud prosperity, its judgment at the hand of God for its sin, its degradation to a Satanic bestial condition, and its final recognition of God and His Christ in the day of His kingly reigning power.

The chapter opens with the king's proclamation and a recital of his experiences. He had owned the God who had delivered His servants from the fury of the fiery furnace, and confessed Him as the only God able to give such deliverance. But he has not profited by his knowledge, for he appears here the same self-exalting, God-forgetting Nebuchadnezzar as he was before. And God has again to speak to him in a vision of the night, and to warn him of what is coming upon him: The former dream had reference to his kingdom and others to follow it. This is more personal. It has reference first to himself, and it also foreshadows what is yet to come upon those whose course will be along the same road, and yet far excel him in pride and godlessness. As a man of the world, he is seen "at rest" in his house, and "flourishing" in his palace (ver. 4). His conquests have made him great, and

there are no enemies able to annoy or disturb him. Surely, then, he must be a happy man. Were it not that thoughts of the future intrude in waking hours, and disturb his repose by night, he might be. But the shadows of that vision of the falling stone and the scattered fragments of the great image haunt him. He cannot banish consideration of what "shall be hereafter." This is the experience of many a worldly man. Envied in his prosperity by others, and seemingly at rest amid his wealth and luxuries, his soul is ill at ease, for he thinks on his future, and if his heart is not hopelessly hardened, like Pharaoh's, by continued trifling with Divine warnings, he knows full well that he has to meet God sometime, and to Him give an account of how he has used the endowments conferred, and the responsibilities committed to him. And so we hear that a dream of the night makes the mighty man "afraid," and the visions of his head "trouble" him. The wise men of his court are unable to help him toward a solution of his perplexity, and they cannot now, as formerly (chap. ii. 9) cheat him with "lying words," for he has had light given him before from God, and it is not so easy to deceive one thus enlightened as it is to mislead a simple heathen, who knows not God. So Daniel, whose former service seems to have been forgotten until the hour of need brought it to mind, is again brought in, and to him the troubled king relates his dream in the remarkable words recorded in verses 10-18. He had seen a fair high tree growing in the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, ample leaves and fruit giving shelter, shadow, and sustenance to birds and beasts. The figure is full of meaning, and aptly sets forth the man of earth, who is like "a green bay tree" (Psa. xxxvii. 35) growing in its own soil, and drawing its sap from the earth, spreads forth its branches (Job xxi. 8-14) on every side. It is the appointed figure also of these great

kingdoms of the world (Ezek. xxxi. 3-6) who know not and care not to know God, or who have apostatized from what they once knew of Him. And in the Lord's Parable of Matt. xiii. 31-32, a "great tree" is the figure of political and worldly Christendom, which shelters those who are enemies of the truth, and, like the birds, steal or destroy what of it is sown in the earth. Thus we have in this great tree, figures of the man, the kingdom, and that which takes the name of Christendom.

The eye of heaven is over this great tree, and one of heaven's angels, or "holy ones," who was its appointed watcher, comes down to deliver a message of solemn judgment against it. Its stock was to be hewn down, its branches lopped, its leaves shaken off, its fruit scattered, its stump and its roots left in the earth, with a brass and iron band around them, in the grass of the field—a terrible story of judgment, surely! And here, the king, in his recital of his vision, passes to that part of it which has particular and personal reference to his own immediate future. "Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth: let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him." And all this was to be, in order that it might be made known that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will—great and abiding truths which are little regarded either by rulers or subjects, then or now. Need we wonder that on hearing the king's dream, Daniel was "astonied for one hour," and "his thoughts troubled him." From what we have seen of him on former occasions, giving full and faithful testimony to the Word of God, we cannot think that it was any fear of consequences to himself in interpreting the king's dream that troubled him. But the message he had to bear was full of momentous issues to

the great monarch, and it was befitting that his own soul should be duly exercised in the message of which he was called to be the bearer. Truths that are spoken by the lips, in order to carry conviction to those that hear, should first exercise the speaker's heart, and their solemnity be duly felt, else they will be without unction and utterly void of power. This is as necessary in ministering the Gospel of God's grace to sinners, and His truth to saints, as it was in bearing that message of impending judgment to the Gentile king of old.

Daniel Interprets the Vision.

"It is thou, O king," sums up the meaning of the symbolic tree. His greatness, his strength, his dominions had been acknowledged and sought unto by all: yet God had been forgotten. His claims had not been owned, His glory had not been sought. Pride had been nourished, self exalted, man's wisdom worshipped; and now its hour of judgment had come, as sooner or later it must, upon all who disown or dishonour God and set aside the warnings of His Word.

The call to repentance and restitution (ver. 27) seems to have fallen upon unheeding ears, for twelve months after, the proud king, walking in the palace of his kingdom, is found saying: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of *my* power, and for the honour of *my* majesty?" All this was of self and for self. God had no place, no portion in it at all. It was the hour of crisis for Nebuchadnezzar. Often reproved and faithfully warned, he hardened his neck, and the long suffering of God had come to its end. While the words were in his mouth, the hand of God was laid upon him, and the Word of God was fulfilled in him. The kingdom departed from him, and he lost his reason. He

was driven from his palace and from the presence of his courtiers to the open fields as a maniac, to be herded with the beasts of the earth. He had, as the Word declares, become "like unto the beasts that perish," and for the space of seven times (or years) his mania—and whatever else afflicted and humbled him—was permitted to work, until he learned that the Most High ruled and was greater than he. Then, as he lifted up his "eyes to heaven" (ver. 34) in acknowledgment of God, the mercy of God rejoiced against His judgment, his understanding returned, and the once great king, convicted, repentant, and truly converted to God, praised and honoured Him, using such words (see verses 33-38) as only a born-again man who has come to know God only can, especially emphasising the fact that "Those that walk in pride, He is able to abase." This is the last we see of this great Gentile. He passes off the scene, repentant, renewed and restored, which may be, and doubtless is, a foreshadowing of that time when the Gentile nations, after being deceived by the "pride of their hearts" (Jer. xlix. 16), and having their "pride of power" brought down (Ezek. xxx. 6), are convicted, repentant, and restored to God, whose Name shall then be great among them (Mal. i. 11). May the lesson not be lost upon those who, in this present time of grace, during the period of Israel's fall under Divine severity, because of unbelief, are sharing the place of privilege once known by the covenant people (Rom. xi. 20-24). To all such the solemn word of warning comes, "Be not high-minded, but fear."

Chapter V.

Belshazzar's Revelry, Idolatry, and Doom. The End of the Babylonian Empire.

IN this historic chapter we have a further development of Gentile wickedness foreshadowed, and of the final judgment of God coming swiftly upon it. A solemn story it surely is, given here by God as a warning to all who rise up in rebellion and solemn mockery against the Most High. Nebuchadnezzar has passed from the scene, and Belshazzar, his grandson, is reigning as King-regent in Babylon.*

The events of this chapter happened some twenty-three years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar. The interval had been a period of conquest, but the warfare and the events of these times, having no special place in relation

* Dean Farrar, and others, who deny the authenticity of the Book of Daniel, assert that "there was no such king as Belshazzar," and that Nabonidus succeeded Nebuchadnezzar as the last ruler of Babylon. But Sir H. Rawlinson has discovered a clay cylinder among the ruins of Chaldea upon which Belshazzar's name is inscribed as the eldest son of Nabonidus, telling that he, during the latter years of his father's reign, was associated with him in his government. It further records that during his father's absence with his army in the field of battle, at Borsippa, he took the direction of affairs within the city, acting as King-regent. This explains the statement in ver. 16, that after the reading of the mysterious "handwriting on the wall" by Daniel, Belshazzar made him "the third ruler in the kingdom," he, himself, being only the second. Thus the folly of those who deny the Word of God is made manifest to all, even by men's own discoveries. A single clay cylinder, buried for ages, and exhumed in the day when men vaunt their unbelief under the high-sounding name of "Higher Criticism," pulverises it to dust. The fact that Daniel addresses Belshazzar as the son of Nebuchadnezzar has been used by the sceptic to discredit his knowledge, but this only exposes his own ignorance, for as every Bible student knows, the Semitic language has no single word for grandfather or grandson. That Nebuchadnezzar was actually the grandfather of Belshazzar is attested by history, for his daughter had become the wife of Nabonidus, and thus she was the mother of the King-regent.

to God's covenant people, or to His servant Daniel, are unrecorded here. Daniel had evidently been forgotten, for when he next appears, it is as a stranger to the king. He had been living apart with God, learning of His mind, and ready for whatever service or testimony God might call him to render. Happy it is for the servant of Christ to be found in such a state, waiting at his Master's gate, equipped and prepared unto every good work.

The prophet Jeremiah had foretold that God would give all nations into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, "that they should serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the time of his land came, and then many great kings shall serve themselves of him" (Jer. xxvii. 6, 7), and now that Word from the Lord is about to be fulfilled.

The King's Last Revel.

Belshazzar is here seen holding his last great, impious revel, with a thousand of his lords, princes, wives, and concubines, and in utter disregard of the judgment that had fallen on his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar, of which he had full knowledge (ver. 22), he adds to all sins of that proud king, the sacrilege of sending for the holy vessels, which had once graced God's temple in Jerusalem, and places them in the midst of that scene of godless revelry, drinking from the golden bowls in praise of his idols, to which he ascribed the honour of giving the victory in his nation's conquests. This was a depth of iniquity and profane insult to the God of heaven, to which Nebuchadnezzar had never sunk, for he acknowledged God as giving him the power he wielded, even although he sadly misused it. It was the crowning act of his guilt, and filled up the cup of his iniquity. Further, God will not allow him to go, and now the hour of his judgment, with the end of Babylon's rule, has come. "In the same

hour" the fingers of a man's hand wrote the final sentence on the palace wall, over against the candlesticks of gold which stood there. It was no dream of the night now, no vision of things to "come to pass hereafter," such as Nebuchadnezzar had seen; but a message of present condign vengeance from an insulted and offended God, according to the Word: "He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1). And the godless king knew it, for his face became blanched in fear, and his knees smote against each other in abject terror. And forgetful of his royal dignity, he cried aloud to bring in his wise men to read the mysterious writing. But they could not. It required one who stood in the counsel of heaven, who was in the possession of God's mind, to read that writing and bring home to the sin-hardened king the full measure of his guilt and doom. Into the midst of that scene of confusion and fear, one had to be brought—the aged queen-mother, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, the wife of Nabonidus, and mother of the king. Surely we may infer she had been a subject of grace, and like her husband in his late years, truly converted to God. For here she is seen as one standing apart in entire separation from the scene of impious revelry. She at once informs her son of Daniel, who was evidently a stranger to Belshazzar, now living in retirement, yet not in idleness or unexercised as to the future of his people's welfare, for it was during this period of retirement from public service that his visions and exercises of soul, as recorded in chapter vii. 1 and viii. 1, took place. All his service to the empire had evidently been forgotten, and like David in the house of Saul, in earlier years (1 Sam. xvii. 55), he is now an unknown stranger to those whom he had formerly served so well.

The Handwriting on the Wall.

Calmly and fearlessly, unmoved by promises of reward, and advancement to a place of honour (ver. 16, 17), he reminds Belshazzar of the judgment of God upon his grandsire, and charges home to his conscience his aggravated guilt in abominable idolatry, informing him that the hand that had written the dreaded sentence on the wall had been sent from heaven, by God. "And," continued the Lord's witness, "this was the writing that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and hath finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." In these brief, but awful words, the proud, blaspheming, and sin-hardened king had his own death-sentence and the doom of his dynasty set before his eyes, and rung in his ears. As the poet has fitly rendered it—

"In that writing behold the Eternal decree,
The sentence of God on thine empire and thee."

And there was to be no further probation, no more long-suffering from God. The blow immediately fell, for the inspired writer immediately adds: "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took (received) the kingdom." Belshazzar, the blasphemer, thus met his doom, Babylon was judged, and on that fatal night the "head of gold" period of the great image reached its close.

In these historic events of the distant past, we may surely read the foreshadowing of a greater and yet future doom which awaits a Babylon city, and corrupt religious system, portrayed by the unerring hand of inspiration in the Book of Revelation, chapters xvii. and xviii.—a city in which

the great men of the commercial world will have their riches stored, and a system in which all the now scattered fragments of corrupt and Christless religion will at last be unified, only to meet their final doom at the hand of an offended and insulted God. And be it remembered by us of this time, that the beginnings and the rapid development of these things are already with us, sometimes advancing by leaps and bounds, at other times working silently and mysteriously, like the hidden leaven (see Matt. xiii. 33, 2 Thess. ii. 7-9), although neither can reach their full maturity, until the present age of grace, and of the Spirit's operations in the world with the Gospel, has reached its close, and the saints of God have been translated from earth to heaven. Then, with the last restraining elements gone, the salt, which had preserved from corruption, being taken from the earth, and the light from the world, the devil will have it all his own way, and the climax of concentrated iniquity and blasphemy will be reached. It is just before the final doom of this great Babylon that a call is heard from God, out of heaven, to His own, who, in spite of her abominations, had still remained in some sort of affinity with her; and that call is, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. xviii. 4). And at this present time, when unequal yokes, and unholy confederations in things commercial and religious, are the order of the day, and scarcely a voice raised against them, the Word of God to his own redeemed and born-again people, who are in association with combinations and alliances of a Babylonish character, is "Come out from among them and be ye separate, touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor. vi. 17).

Chapter VI.

Medo-Persian Empire. The Decree of Darius. Daniel in the Den of Lions.

THE scenes of this chapter are laid in the days of the second empire, symbolized in the great image (chap. ii.) by the breast and arms of silver. The Babylonian rule, which had lasted some sixty years, was over, and with it that *golden* form of government, in which the king's will was absolute, and his authority independent of those over whom he ruled, had come to an end. The second empire, as the opening words of our chapter tell, was "inferior," not in extent, but in the character of its rule. The power for government was divided between the king and certain princes, or nobles, who were "set over the kingdom," sustaining, and in measure controlling the crown. Their influence is seen in the ability they had to make a decree, and having got the king to ratify it, they then insisted on its authority, and Darius dare not resist their claim. Of three who were set over these princes, Daniel, now over fourscore years old, was first and chief. And it is truly blessed to here learn that since the day that he entered the broad-walled city as a captive, he has continued true to God and faithful to the trust committed to him as a servant of his masters according to the flesh. So that Darius, who knew his worth as a faithful servant, was about to still further advance him, by setting him "over the whole realm" (ver. 3). But this promotion

aroused the envy of the nobles, and they set themselves to devise a plan for his downfall, and thus get rid of the hated Jew, for there can be little doubt that his presence there looking after the king's interests, "that he should have no damage," was a check on their avarice and a constant guard on their conduct. So they plot and watch to find some cause, some "occasion or fault" in his way of doing the king's business, and of serving the State, out of which they can formulate a case against Daniel. But as the record reads, they were defeated, for "they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him" (ver. 4). What a splendid letter of commendation, these enemies of his, brimming with envy and jealousy as they were, were obliged to give to Daniel. He was what every Christian is now called to be—"blameless and harmless," a son of God "without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation" (Phil. ii. 15). And if there were more of this type of Christian, men inwardly of an "excellent spirit," and outwardly "without rebuke," adorning the doctrine of the God whom they profess to worship by a righteous and unblameable life among men, there would be such results of their testimony, such manifestations of God's power, as would arouse the devil against it, and such power exercised on their behalf, that even men of the world, like Darius the Mede, would have to own that "the living God" is with them as their Deliverer (ver. 26, 27).

The King's Decree.

But if these men cannot find a cause in Daniel's ways, nor in his service to the State, to use against him, they know that they can succeed in their devilish scheme if they can interdict him in anything that concerns "the law of his God." For they must have known enough of the

aged statesman, who began his life as a youth in the palace of Babylon with a "purposed heart," to safely reckon that no law of prince or people would turn him aside from doing what the God whom he loved and served had willed and commanded. This was a fine tribute to the faithfulness of the man whom they hated. So they devise a plot, which has the cunning of the serpent in it, for it is just of the kind that appeals to the proud heart of the king, and leads him on along the course that they desire him to take. The flattering decree, as it was framed by the wily nobles, seemed to give great honour to Darius, and display the loyalty of all his subjects. For thirty days no petition was to be made to any god or man, save to King Darius. He, and he alone is to be owned as God for a whole month. The king signs the decree, and thereby binds himself to its enactment, according to the Medo-Persian law, which altereth not.

The Prayer of Daniel.

These wicked men knew full well that they had Daniel sure and fast in their grip now, and it must have been with a fiendish satisfaction that they congregated around the wall of his house, and listened under the open window of his chamber, which looked "toward Jerusalem," to hear him pray. Nor were they disappointed, for Daniel was there, calm and peaceful, kneeling in prayer before his God, neither acting the coward or ostentatiously declaiming against the regal edict, but just as he "did aforetime," while there was neither edict nor danger, praying "three times a day," like the royal Psalmist King of earlier times (Psa. lv. 17). He gave thanks, too, as well as prayed, for he knew that he was "safe in Jehovah's keeping," and that no weapon that was formed against him could prosper. Blessed be God for such a testimony

to that Word, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee" (Isa. xxvi. 3).

In the Lion's Den.

But his confidence in God, and his devotion to God's truth, did not save him from the trial of faith to its utmost measure, nor keep him out of the power of the inflexible law. The God who had permitted the three faithful Hebrews to be cast into the fiery furnace, now allows his servant Daniel to be cast into the lion's den, in order that He may display His power in his preservation while there, and in his deliverance and uplifting from it. The king, much as he sought it, found no way of honouring his own law and sparing the man whom he honoured, for the law which bore his name withstood the purpose of his love. And so Daniel was cast into the place of death, the stone was laid on its mouth, and the king's seal, with that of his lords, confirmed the sentence of the new Medo-Persian law, and witnessed to the exhaustion of its claim. Daniel's God now enters the scene. Man had done his utmost, he could do no more. The hatred of Daniel's foes had been allowed a temporary triumph, but it was not to be for long. The reward of Daniel's obedience, and the answer to his faith, are sure. And so we read that when the king had risen early from his sleepless bed, and hastened to the den, the voice of a preserved Daniel, *alive* in the place of death, is heard saying, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me" (ver. 22). And at the king's command, the man who had honoured God, was lifted up out of the place of death (having satisfied the claim of the law), and raised to royal favour and honour, while the men who had conspired against him

were cast into the den and immediately destroyed. Thus God's faithfulness was proved, and His servant honoured.

Evangelically, the familiar story portrays another law, with its power of death, from which no man is able to deliver. But One over whom it had no claim, Himself undertook to meet the sinner's obligations, and to sustain his judgment. "Made of a woman, made under the law," He came "to redeem them that were under the law" (Gal. iv. 3, 4). And this He did by bearing its curse, while hanging on the tree (Gal. iii. 13). Then He was laid in the tomb in the garden near the Cross. The mighty stone, bearing the Roman seal, confirmed the sentence of death fulfilled, and the guardian angel from the courts of heaven, bare witness to His acceptance there. Then the God of Resurrection came into that scene, and raising up from among the dead the Son of His love, He received Him up into the highest heaven, and set Him in the highest place of power, placing a Victor's crown of glory and honour (Heb. ii. 9) on His brow. His resurrection is the seal of God's acceptance of His work, and the witness to the believing sinner's justification (Rom. iv. 24, 25). Never again could the Medo-Persian law demand the life of Daniel, for it had exhausted its claim. To it he had already died, and now he lived beyond its sentence. And so the living Lord, who once for us and our sins entered the realm of death, and became for a season under its power, has been raised to an "endless life," over which law and death can never make their claim. And His sure Word to all who have come to Him, and now are represented by Him, and vitally are one with and "in Him," is, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19).

Dispensationally, the story foreshadows that which the Word elsewhere foretells—viz.: that in the midst of the last great "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. xxx. 7) there

will be a faithful remnant who will stand true to their God, and make their prayer unto Him in the time of their distress. When the wilful king, who "will magnify himself above every God" (Dan. xi. 36) is claiming the allegiance of mankind, and demanding either their worship or their lives (Rev. xiii. 15), to them the living Lord will appear in person (Zech. xii. 8, 9; xiii. 2, 3) in the hour of their deepest agony, and give them a glorious deliverance, setting them on high as the objects of His love and the people of His choice.

In these four historic chapters and their events, we learn the moral condition of the varied forms of Gentile rule, as God has seen it, and will ultimately deal with in judgment. In its three representative rulers, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius, we see foreshadowed the characteristics of the coming Great Kaiser of the ten kingdoms of the Roman earth, the last monarch of Christendom, who will embody in himself the pride, the persecution, the blasphemy, and the deification of man in full measure, upon whom the judgment that awaits the ripened iniquity of ages, so long and patiently borne by a silent heaven, will come.

Chapter VII.

Daniel's Night Visions of the Four Beasts, with the Interpretation thereof.

THE second portion of the Book of Daniel begins with this chapter, the visions of which, as we are informed in verse 1, occurred in the first year of Belshazzar, which takes us back to a period before the events recorded in chapter v., in which the end of Belshazzar's reign, and of the Chaldean empire, is seen. It would seem as if Daniel had been in retirement during this period, for it was as an unknown stranger that he was summoned into the banquet hall to read the mysterious handwriting on the wall. While Belshazzar was openly revelling in blasphemy and impiety, he was living in seclusion, alone with God, receiving revelations from heaven regarding the great world powers, present and future, with many revelations regarding his own beloved people and land, concerning which his heart had been so deeply exercised.

The interpretation given by Daniel of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream had told of the smiting of the image representing the great world powers, to be followed by the setting up of a kingdom by the God of heaven, which was not to pass away. From the writings of Moses and the Prophets, and many of the earlier Psalms, with all of which he was doubtless familiar, he would have learned that his own beloved people, the seed of Abraham, again restored to their land, with Jerusalem as the regal city,

were to have the chief place in that coming time of predicted glory and of blessing.

But not a word had been uttered, not a pledge had been given in all the predictions made to the Gentile rulers as to when or how these prophecies and promises regarding the covenant people were to be fulfilled. So we may rightly assume that the godly prophet, at this time, as on a later occasion, would be much in prayer, and much occupied with the Word (see chap. ix. 2-4) regarding it. And the visions of this chapter, with the two that follow it, are the answer to these enquiries.

The vision of the image was first given to Nebuchadnezzar, and its message was the character of the power committed by God to the rulers of the four great empires, symbolised in the metals of which it was composed, with the use they made of it, and the responsibility which was laid upon them for its exercise, and the judgment of God upon them for its abuse, to promote selfish ends. These were matters which men of the world could understand, and were responsible to hear and heed, just as the unconverted now are to have the truths of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (Acts xxiv. 25), with the call to repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts xx. 21), made known to them. But it is only one who has been brought into relation to God, as his child, and who is in possession of His Spirit, to whom spiritual and hidden things, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, are revealed (see 1 Cor. ii. 11-14), who can understand and appreciate spiritual truths. And so it is not to the man of earth, the great Gentile, Nebuchadnezzar, but to Daniel, the man of faith, that the moral *character* and *conduct* of these times of the Gentiles is here made known. And this is why the symbols used to describe the same empires, as are shewn

in the image, are represented by fierce and devouring beasts, in which their true character and doings are depicted to faith's view, as they are known to God and seen in heaven.

The prophet here relates what he saw in his vision. "The four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, diverse one from another" (ver. 2, 3). "The great sea" is the Bible name for the Mediterranean (Numb. xxxiv. 6). This sea, which is the territorial centre of the nations within the scope of Daniel's vision, is the present, as it has been the past highway of the world's commerce, and is destined to play a chief part in the last great struggle as to who shall hold and use "the mastery of the seas." Around its shores were the homes of the vast empires of the past, and when these ancient seats of former greatness shall have regained their vigour, and Israel in her own land shall have turned the eyes of the world to the east, the Mediterranean Sea, and its surrounding shores, will become more than ever a scene of peculiar energy, and of warfare. On this sea, in Daniel's vision, the four winds strove, and out of a scene of storm he saw four beasts arise. Their common birthplace was a scene of convulsion and strife, symbolised in these waters of the deep, which, in the language of the Scriptures, are "peoples and multitudes and tongues" (Rev. xvii. 15), "the multitude of many people which make a noise like the noise of the seas" (Isa. xvii. 12). In the interpretation given to Daniel, "the four beasts" are said to be "four kings which shall arise out of the *earth" (ver. 17). This marks their origin as being not from God, but by man's will and power, as contrasted, with what the Lord's kingdom will be (John vi. 15, xviii. 36). He receives it from God, and delivers it up again to Him (Luke xix. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 24).

The First Three Wild Beasts.

The **FIRST** was like a *Lion*, and had eagles' wings. The lion is the king of beasts, the symbol of strength. It represents the Chaldean empire, whose dignity of power was received direct from God, although misused in cruelty and oppression. This lion had eagles' wings, denoting the energy and rapidity of its conquests. But these were "plucked": it lost its power of extension, and took to building palaces, and pursuits of peace. But although "a man's heart was given to it," and it had the intelligence and attitude of one who knows God, it was in respect of its conduct a "beast," whose end is to be destroyed.

The **SECOND** beast, which represents the Medo-Persian empire, was a *Bear*, ferocious and flesh-devouring, which raised up itself on one side (or for one dominion), for although the Medes and Persians were separate in their origin, the former being an ancient nomad race, and the latter a modern people, they were combined in their rule, and acted as one people. The "three ribs in its mouth" represent the three empires of Nineveh, Cræsus, and Chaldea, whose flesh it had already devoured. But this great empire, of which Cyrus was the most notable ruler, passed, to make way for another.

The **THIRD** empire is Greece, symbolised by a *Leopard*, the most elegant, agile but cunning of the beasts of prey. Its four wings represent the swiftness and extent of its conquests, which were beyond any the world had yet seen: for in the days of Alexander the Great, its first king, Asia Minor and Egypt were added to his empire, which, within ten years had extended across the Indus. Its four heads represent its final division among his four victorious generals at the time of Alexander's death, whose dominions were successively subdued by the Romans, until with the last

representative of Alexander's power, Cleopatra of Egypt, whose power ceased with the battle of Actium, B.C. 31, the third empire passed, and the ROMAN power began, in the person of Augustus Cæsar (Luke ii. 1). Thus the great empires of the past,* which were seen by God and presented to His servant as a devouring lion, a rapacious bear, and a cunning leopard, monstrosities in wickedness and utter godlessness, neither fearing God nor regarding man, each passed from the scenes of their sins and crimes, as all present day nations and empires must pass, while the rulers and individuals who compose them await the hour of judgment, when, before "the great white throne," and the open books, God will give to every man according as his works have been.

The Night Vision of the Fourth Beast.

The FOURTH beast symbolises the *Roman Empire*. It is more fully described than any of its predecessors, a special vision, and a direct interpretation (ver. 19) being given to Daniel regarding it. Diverse from the others, "exceeding dreadful," and incapable of being symbolised by any single beast of prey, it embodied all the ferocity of those which had gone before, and with its great "teeth of iron and nails of brass," "brake in pieces," and "stamped with its feet" all that came in its way. The "Rise and Fall" of this Roman Empire is a matter of history, open to all, but which God here passes over unnoticed, simply describing the character of its rule, and passing on to the last great crisis of its history, which is still future. This is what is introduced in verse 8, and interpreted in verses 20-25, which we will consider later. How truly this fourth empire has answered to the symbol here given of a beast "dreadful and terrible," the pages of the New Testament, with the subsequent history of Christianity, tell. It rejected

* Note H.

and crucified the Son of God, it persecuted and martyred apostles and saints. In its Pagan years, it sought to blot out the name of Christianity from the earth, while its Papal centuries are named the "Dark Ages." But its course is not yet run. It will appear again in a tenfold form, at the time of the end, when its power will extend to "the whole earth" (ver. 23). But its end will be by judgment from heaven, and its body will be "given to the burning flame" (ver. 11), because of its blasphemies against God, and its cruel persecutions of His people. From the time of Jerusalem's fall and destruction at the hands of the Roman armies, as foretold by the Lord (Luke xxi. 20-24), all detail of history has ceased, the clock of prophecy has stopped, and not until the present age of grace, and of the outcalling of a people by the Gospel from all nations, for a place and portion in the heavens, and their removal from earth to be glorified with Christ, thence to return with Him in judgment upon the world of the ungodly (Jude 14, 15), can the broken thread be resumed in the history of the earthly people, and the events of prophecy in this and the succeeding chapters come to pass. These are the "many days" (Hos. iii. 4) in which the earthly people abide "without a king and without a prince," and in which Jerusalem is "trodden down of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi. 24). Hence all attempts to tabulate events, and endeavour to make them coincide with the prophetic Scriptures, must fail. For until the Jews are again in the land of promise, recognised there as a nation, with Jerusalem as a city of the Jews, having resumed her place as the centre of government, the suspension of prophetic fulfilment must continue.* This is, indeed, the key to a right understanding of this, as well as many other prophetic Scriptures, and when this is forgotten, or set aside, confusion and misinterpretation must result.

* Note 1.

It is important to observe, and to remember too, that the subject of this chapter—like that of chapter ii.—is that of *secular* power committed by God to kings for the government of the world, not of *spiritual* or *ecclesiastical* power for the government of the Church. The latter is never delegated to the kings of the earth, but is bestowed by the living Head in heaven to “faithful men” (2 Tim. ii. 2), whose faith and manner of life (Heb. xiii. 7) are worthy of all imitation; who serve, not after the pattern of the great ones among the Gentiles (Matt. xx. 25), but according to the pattern of Him who took the bondservant’s form (Phil. ii. 7) and girded Himself (John xiii. 4) to serve others.

The Judgment Scene in Heaven.

The prophet is next called to behold in vision a scene in heaven. His eyes for the time are raised from the earth, on which wild beasts have ruled and righteousness has suffered, to a judgment throne, where justice and equity are meted out without respect of persons. This vision is immediately before the judgment and doom of the fourth beast, the restored and re-formed Roman Empire, with its ten kings, and their Head, represented in the “little horn,” whose mouth spake “great words” against God. This is not the judgment of the dead, recorded in Rev. xx. 11-13, nor is it the judgment of the saints, as mentioned in 2 Cor. v. 10. The judgment here concerns living men on earth, at the hands of the Lord Jesus, to whom “all judgment” (John v. 22) has been committed. Here it is His judgment on the living nations of the Roman earth.

“The Ancient of Days,” in His snow-white garment, represents God in the purity and perfection of His judgment: “fire” is the emblem of His holiness, and “wheels” the resistless course of His power, as manifested in action on the earth (see Ezek. i. 15-21).

The Investiture of the Son of Man.

The result of this judgment scene in heaven, with the examination of the opened books is, that the Lord Jesus, as Son of Man, is invested with the sovereignty of earth, and then as Rev. xi. 15-17 informs us, He is acclaimed by "great voices in heaven" as taking unto Himself "His great power" to reign. And although the nations are "angry," and in contemptuous pride "imagine vain things," exclaiming, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us," they begin to feel the "power of His anger." But unlike the time in which He was led as a silent lamb to the slaughter, He who now sitteth in the heavens begins to "speak unto them in His wrath" (Psa. ii. 1-4), and to vex them in His sore displeasure.

The Judgment of the Beast.

While the first three beasts had their "dominion" taken away," being gradually subdued and absorbed by their successors, this fourth empire is visited by destructive judgment. Of this judgment, many Scriptures give us fuller details, especially Revelation chapter xiii., where the Apostle John, while exiled in Patmos, is shewn the last form of the Roman Empire, with its ten crowned kings, waging war against God and His people, led on by Satan, who invests it with his authority and goads it on in its blasphemy against God and in persecution of His people.*

The Little Horn.

In the vision (ver. 8), and its interpretation (ver. 20-24), there appears "a little horn," represented as insignificant at first, but with "eyes" of intelligence, and "a mouth speaking great things," with "a look more stout than his fellows," before whom three of them fall. He becomes

* For further details, see Vol., "The Book of Revelation," by same Author.

Head and Kaiser of the Roman earth, a blasphemer of God and persecutor, able to make war with the saints of the Most High" (ver. 22)—or of "the high places"—names given to the faithful in Israel of this latter time. Into the hand of this desolator they will be given—as many other Scriptures fully tell us—for "a time and times and the dividing of time"—a distinct period, elsewhere said to be three and a half years, "forty and two months," or 1260 days (Rev. xiii. 5; xii. 6; xi. 3). He is evidently a Gentile, unlike Antichrist or the second beast of Rev. xiii. 11, 12, who is a Jew, otherwise he would not be accepted as Israel's Messiah—a person not only of great pretensions, but of great resources, having the whole authority of the Dragon at his disposal, and able to use it for deception as well as destruction, a man of genius, and capable of inspiring his followers with confidence. He it is whom "the whole world" will wonder after and worship (Rev. xiii. 8). But his end will be condign judgment at the hand of the returning Lord, when he and his accomplice in guilt, the Antichrist, will be caught red-handed in their rebellion against God, and cast alive into "the lake of fire," as its first tenants, for eternity (Rev. xx. 20).

Upon the judgment of the beast, as in the destruction of the image by the falling stone in chap. ii., the everlasting kingdom of the Son of Man is set up, and unlike all that have preceded it, this kingdom shall not "pass away" into the hands of others, nor shall it ever be "destroyed" by the hand of usurper or conqueror. So we sing—

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

Chapter VIII.

The Vision of the Ram and He-Goat. Gabriel's Interpretation. Time of the End.

IN this chapter we return to the Hebrew language, the Chaldee or Aramiac portion having ended with chapter vii. The visions and their message in the latter portion of the Book have a special reference to Daniel's people, the Jews, and to Jerusalem, the royal city; and the Gentiles are only introduced, and their kings and rulers named, in so far as they are connected with the covenant people, their land and city. Much of the prophecy refers to "the latter time"—the time of the end, and "the latter time of the indignation"—these phrases occurring frequently in this and subsequent chapters. For while the prophetic visions of these chapters have had a partial fulfilment in the past, their complete fulfilment awaits the return of Israel to their land, their establishment there as a nation, and the rise and acceptance of a great Gentile monarch as their king, with his false prophet, THE Antichrist, as their Messiah.

The Time of the Vision.

The date given for the vision of this chapter is "the third year of Belshazzar"—shortly before the close of the Babylonian period of rule. Although Daniel was evidently in Babylon when he received the vision, he was carried in spirit to the palace in Shushan, in the land of

Elam, which very soon after became one of the capitals of the Medo-Persian empire, the scene of Nehemiah's service (Neh. i. 2), and of Esther and Mordecai's experiences (Esth. i. 2 ; ii. 5).

The scope of the vision is narrower than the vision of chapter vii., and is limited to the second and third empires—viz. : the Medo-Persian and Grecian. The Ram with two horns, which pushed "westward and northward and southward," overcoming and destroying all that came before him, is said to represent "the kings of Media and Persia" (ver. 20) in their conquests, which continued without a break, until they were cut short by Alexander the Great, the first king of Greece, who, as we are here informed by the angel, is represented in the vision of the He-goat with the notable horn between his eyes, who came from the west, and in "the fury of his power" ran against and overcame the Ram, waxing very great—all of which was fulfilled to the letter in the rapid and irresistible progress of Alexander, who appeared about 334 B.C., pushing onward to the Indus and the Nile, thence to Syria, Egypt, Babylon, and Persia, stamping upon the conquered territories of the Persian power, and bringing all under his control. Then, as conqueror of the world, he died at the age of 32, in a drunken revel at Babylon, after having wept there because there were no more worlds to conquer. Thus "the great horn" of the He-goat, representing the third empire, was broken, and "four notable ones" came up in the place of the horn which had been broken. These were Alexander's four great Generals, among whom his empire was divided. Thus the history of the times beyond those in which the prophet lived have been written by God's unerring hand, and thus far the vision has been fulfilled. But the explanation by the angel goes beyond the vision—as is common in Scripture.

The Little Horn.

Out from one of these four divisions of Alexander's empire there came forth "a little horn," representing a king who, although insignificant at first, develops into a blasphemer of God and an oppressor of His people. Historic interpreters find the fulfilment of all that is here said about this king in Antiochus Epiphanes, because of his sacrilege of the temple, and persecutions of the Jews in their city and land. But while the career and actions of Antiochus may be, and as I personally think are, described in the actings of the "little horn" of this vision, the ultimate fulfilment belongs to the future, and will have its answer in a coming king, who will be an oppressor of Israel and the enemy of God, as well as monarch of Assyria—named "the Assyrian" in Isa. x. 5; Micah vii. 12. For the most striking points in verses 10-11 have not been fulfilled in anything belonging to the past.*

The Angel's Interpretation.

The first mention of Gabriel occurs in verse 16, and introduces the subject of angelic interposition and service connected with the rise and fall of kingdoms, and the welfare of God's saints, who are found in them. In the distant past, as surely as in the present, they had their place and part in ministering to those who were to become "heirs of salvation" (Heb. i. 14). The angelic interpretation gives further information regarding the actings of the king of "fierce countenance" (ver. 23), who is to appear in the latter time of the kingdoms of Alexander's successors, "when the transgressors are come to the full"—or accomplished, as it is in the margin. His power for evil will be great, and his policy for deception no less, while in his pride of heart he will magnify himself and stand up

in bold defiance of the Prince of princes—a height of arrogance and daring which excels all that has yet been seen on this earth. Pharaoh of old confronted the presence of the God of Israel as it shone in the cloudy pillar on the Red Sea shore, but he had to learn that the Lord fought for His redeemed and sheltered people, and that no weapon formed could prosper against them. And thus this last defier of the Prince of princes will learn that the Lord of Hosts, mighty in battle, is more than a match for all his chivalry, and so he “shall be broken without hand,” and come to an inglorious end. This glance of the prophet into the distant future, across the centuries, is in full keeping with other prophetic Scriptures, in which the present dispensation is bridged over, and events of the past separated only by a comma, from things which are yet to come. The two advents of our Lord are in the same manner brought apparently together in such passages as Psa. xxii. 20-27; Isa. liii. 10-12; Isa. lxi. 1, 2; with Luke iv. 10, 19, and yet we know that between “the sufferings of Christ,” and the “glory that should follow,” more than nineteen centuries have already intervened. As in a mountain range, viewed from some distance, peaks appear to the eye as close together, yet when approached, it is found that valleys and fields lie between, so the past and the future appear in the prophet’s vision, while we, with the New Testament in our hands, know that between the Cross and the Kingdom, intervenes the present age of God’s grace, of the Gospel’s power among all nations, and of the outcalling of a people for heaven, who will come to earth with their returning Lord when He appears to judge and scatter His foes, and who, with Him, will reign over a restored Israel, and a purged and peaceful earth. Of these things Daniel has nothing at all to tell us, for as the apostle informs us, the outcalling of the Church, her union

and glory with Christ, were part of a "hidden mystery," which could not be revealed until redemption had been accomplished, Christ raised as living Head of the Church, and the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, given consequent on Christ's glorification (John vii. 39) to form the Church, as the body of Christ, and indwell it as the temple and habitation of God" (Eph. ii. 22).

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth.

The recognition of this "timeless gap," in which God has no recognised earthly nation as His "peculiar people," and no earthly city as the place of His Name and worship, and the seat of His government, from which He rules the world, is essential to a right understanding of the prophetic Scriptures. Where this is denied, or ignored, confusion and error must inevitably abound. When events which are yet to be fulfilled, after God resumes His dealings with the earthly covenant people, who are not "cast away" for ever (see Rom. xi.), but because of their unbelief "broken off" until "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," are tabulated and made to fit into the history of the last nineteen centuries, those who do so leave the clear light of the Word of God, to become guided by their own imaginations, or the guesses of others. This *Historic** school of interpreters and expositors—represented by Fleming, Cumming, Elliot, and Guinness, find in the seals, trumpets, and vials of the Book of Revelation, predictions of events which have already been fulfilled in the Christian era, such as the fall of Paganism, the rise of the Moslem power, and the Reformation of the sixteenth century. They say the predictions regarding Antichrist have had their full answer in the Popes of Rome, that the Babylon of Revelation is the Papacy, and that the dates of these events correspond to certain figures and times named in Daniel and Revelation. This-

system can only be harmonized by placing the personal return of the Lord Jesus, to receive His people to Himself—which event is the proper hope of the believer and of the Church—at a distance, with many things to intervene, and many signs to appear, before it happens. This makes it impossible for any to be “looking for that blessed hope” (Titus ii. 12), and “waiting for the coming of the Son from heaven” (1 Thess. i. 10).

That there will be “signs” before “the coming of the Son of Man” to earth in judgment, Matt. xxiv. 6, 14, 30 informs us; but this is not the proximate hope of the believer and the Church. It is the personal return of the Son of God from heaven (1 Thess. i. 10) to receive unto Himself His own, according to His promise (John xiv. 3). And this event—which is the very first of all the great events of the future—waits on no sign, nor is it tabulated among the dates and visions of the Book of Daniel. For, while much may happen before the Lord comes thus, nothing in the whole scope of prophecy must precede His coming.

Chapter IX.

Daniel's Confession and Prayer. The Angel's Message. Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.

THE prophet's vision by the river Ulai, and Gabriel's interpretation of it, caused him great astonishment, and caused him to become sick. His thoughts were troubled, for a long and stormy period had been shown him as intervening between the time in which he lived and the realisation of his hopes regarding his people and nation. And yet the Word of the Lord, through Jeremiah the prophet, was clear and plain, that seventy years would be accomplished in "the desolations of Jerusalem." But although these years had then almost expired, there was not a single sign of the captivity of Judah coming to its end, or of the fulfilment of the promise of their restoration to their land, although the words of Jeremiah included gracious words (chap. xxiv. 5-10) regarding that desired event. The power of Babylon, their captor, had indeed been broken, and "Darius, the Mede," was on the throne, but no change had come to the captives of Judah, or upon the desolations of Jerusalem. So in his distress he turned to his God, to seek His face by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth and ashes. It is good for the soul in a day of perplexity to have "God and the Word of His grace" (Acts xx. 20) to turn to and consult, and not be at the mercy of man's traditions and vain imaginations in Divine things. Many are led far astray by reading

men's books and consulting "theological writers" on the great events of the future, concerning which there is probably more nonsense and error taught than on any other Biblical subject. To go direct to God, acknowledging Him, confessing sin and failure honestly and freely, being willing to be taught and guided by His Word, is the path of safety, as it is of blessing, always and everywhere, for the children of God. And we gather from Daniel's confession and prayer, which God has preserved to us in verses 5-19, that there was another Scripture before his mind, and deeply exercising his heart. Away back in Leviticus xxvi. he had read these awful words which forewarned his nation that if they disobeyed God, He would punish and scatter them among the heathen, where many would perish. This, alas! he had seen fulfilled. But he had been kept alive, and there was a gracious promise left, that if they "shall confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers," and their humbled hearts "accept the punishment" of their iniquity, then God would remember His firm covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and deal with them in mercy. And later still, in the time of Solomon, when things were at their best and brightest in Israel, the great and wise king, in his prayer at the dedication of the temple asked, that if for their sin they should be carried away captive, and while in the "land of the enemy" should bethink themselves and confess their sin, returning in heart to the God whom they had wronged, praying toward His temple, God would forgive their sin and give them compassion among those who had carried them captive (1 Kings xiii. 46-50). There is always blessing to the individual who takes a low place before God, humbling himself under His mighty hand (1 Pet. v. 5, 6). Daniel, as a prince among his people, here takes the place of self judgment, confessing his

people's sins, as if they were his own. His confession is very touching, and his prayer is one of the most remarkable recorded in the Bible. It breathes the true spirit of faith, and in its scope there is humiliation, confession, supplication, and close dealing with a God whose Word was believed, and whose hand was recognised. The fervency of its supplication, and the deep yearning of heart expressed in its intercession, are truly wonderful, and they present a *striking contrast to the "forms of prayer" and wearisome repetitions* in much that is heard as being addressed to God in our time.

The Angel's Visit and Message.

While Daniel was yet "speaking in prayer" to God, he was interrupted by the angel Gabriel—who had already been God's messenger to him (chap. viii. 16)—appearing with a message of love and answer to his prayer, and a further revelation from God concerning his people, their land, and city—in fact, the fullest and most far-reaching prophecy that the Bible contains concerning the future history of the covenant people. There is always blessing to the soul in personal dealing with God, and all the revivals and times of *awakening and conversion of which we read and hear, have come as answers to prayers.* And many more of which we shall hear the story in heaven, have no doubt come in answer to the prayers of faithful souls, whose names are unknown on earth, but recorded in heaven. It is wonderful, too, how quickly God's answer came to Daniel's prayer, how near heaven is to earth, and how easily the throne of God in the highest heaven, can communicate directly with a praying saint on this earth. Daniel was assured by the angel that he was "greatly beloved" in heaven, that at the very beginning of his supplication the commandment went forth, and that this

mission to the man of prayer that afternoon, at the very hour in which the evening oblation was wont to be offered on the altar at Jerusalem—which reminded him of God's interest in His people's worship, which long had been silent—was to give him fuller light concerning his people. The message in its scope includes the entire history of the Jewish people, from their captivity in Babylon to "the last end of the indignation," and far beyond it, into the light and glory awaiting them in the future.

The Era of the Seventy Weeks.

The light which Daniel had received, through reading the prophecies of Jeremiah, had enabled him to see that the time was near when the seventy years of the captivity of Judah, and of the desolations of Jerusalem, should come to an end, and that the "set time" for God's favour toward them in the fulfilment of His promise of their restoration, was near. But the people were not in a fit condition to return to the land of their fathers, for, when the time did come, and Cyrus, the Persian king, proclaimed throughout his vast kingdom that whoever of all the people desired to return to Jerusalem to build the temple, was at liberty to go, only a small number—a "remnant," as Ezra calls them (Ezra ix. 8)—had the heart to do so. The majority chose to remain in captivity, without a temple, and with no collective worship of, or testimony for their God. So that the return of those who went up in three companies, at different times, with Joshua, Ezra, and Nehemiah, was only a small affair, and did not fulfil these promises of the nation's spiritual and material blessing, as described by the Prophets and sung in the Psalms. These await a future day. And it is of this coming era, and the stages that lead up to it, that the remaining visions of the Book of Daniel speak. For nobody whose mind is free from

preconceived opinion can, with an open Bible in his hand, entertain for a moment the theory that the great events, of which these chapters speak, have already been fulfilled in any part of Israel's past history.

The words of the angel to Daniel are recorded in chapter ix. 24-27, and as they stand in the Revised Bible, with its marginal readings, are: "Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." These words form the first part of Gabriel's message. They are so important in their details, and have so much in them which has been misunderstood and misinterpreted, that they claim a careful reading and consideration.

The Signification of the Word, "Weeks."

Daniel's prayer had in view the seventy years of Judah's captivity, and Jerusalem's desolations, which were almost fulfilled. Gabriel's message, which was given in answer to that prayer, told of a period of seven times seventy yet to come, through which the history of his nation had yet to run before the kingdom predicted, and the honours promised could be theirs. This seems to be the key to the prophecy. In ordinary use of the word "week" we mean seven days, but in the Hebrew it simply means a *hebdomad* or septenary number of seven, so that its literal translation in this passage is "seventy sevens," without determining whether of days or years. The word is akin to our word *dozen*, which may be used in speaking of a dozen of days, or of weeks, or of years. In the same way we can say a *hebdomad* of days, or of weeks, or of years. Here the word, being used alone, and not followed by either, its

application must be determined by reference to other Scriptures. In verse 2, "years" are spoken of, and the three periods named in verse 26 can leave no doubt that weeks of years are there in view, for neither Daniel nor any Jewish reader of his time, would have been likely to suppose that the wall of Jerusalem could be completed in forty-nine weeks of days. The time that it took in building was forty-nine years, or a week of weeks, seven times seven. This surely puts it beyond all doubt that weeks of years are meant throughout the passage, in each of its three divisions.

The word "determined," means "to divide" or to sever into portions, and these seventy weeks or *hebdomads* have been severed by God, as it were, from the rest of time, to effect in them His purposes toward His chosen people, Israel, and His earthly city, Jerusalem; and they are, as we here learn, "divided" into three separate portions, two of which are now past, and one future. To "finish transgression and make an end of sins" has reference to the sins of Israel, and the time when they will be "sought for" and not found, because they will then have learned the meaning and used the words of Isa. liii. 3-6, in reference to themselves. And the "reconciliation" and bringing in of "everlasting righteousness" has reference to the same experiences, and not to the work of Christ on the Cross, to which these words are often applied. For although it will be in virtue of that work that the earthly people will at last find their reconciliation and their cleansing (Zech. xiii. 1), and in Him whose work it is their "righteousness" (Jer. xxxiii. 14-16), the period in which this will be their blissful experience is, that when they shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and confess Him as their Messiah (Zech. xii. 10). To "seal the vision" will be to ratify it by fulfilment, and "to anoint the most Holy"—not the Person of our Lord*—but the setting apart of

* Dr. Tregelles says the expression is nowhere used in Scripture of a person.

the holy place in the temple, which will be re-built in Jerusalem.

The Beginning of the Seventy Weeks.

“From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks. It shall be built again with street and moat, in perilous times.” The seventy weeks date, therefore, from the edict of Artaxerxes, as recorded in Nehemiah ii. 5-9, for that was the decree given for the building of the city (Neh. vii. 15)—not, as is frequently calculated, from the decree of Cyrus, in Ezra i. 1, which was for the building of the temple. The first of the three periods of “weeks,” therefore, dates from B.C. 445, and as it took 49 years to finish, this period ended B.C. 396, which is the date of Malachi’s prophecy, and of the close of Old Testament prophetic testimony.

The Second Division of the “Weeks.”

The second period consists of threescore and two weeks, which, as the angel informed Daniel, were to have their consummation in “Messiah the Prince.” This expression is remarkable, and it refers to a definite time in the life of the Lord Jesus. Was it fulfilled in His birth? I believe not. There is only one event which answers to the prophecy: that was, the closing event in our Lord’s public life, His entrance into Jerusalem, riding on the colt of an ass, in fulfilment of the word of Zechariah ix. 9, when He presented Himself as Israel’s Messiah-king; and that event occurred 483 years from the date of the edict of Nehemiah, chapter ii., to *the very day*,* the interval being exactly seven times 69 prophetic years of 360 days. And

* For confirmation of this statement see Sir Robert Anderson’s book, “The Coming Prince.”

in the same week the further word of the prophecy was fulfilled; Messiah shall be "cut off and shall have nothing." This was fulfilled at the Cross, where He was rejected and crucified as the King of the Jews.

"Messiah the Prince."

Certain critics and sceptics of the past and present, deny that these words refer to the Lord Jesus. With a remarkable show of superior knowledge, they claim to have discovered that the "Messiah" was a deposed high priest, and the "cutting off" refers to his murder. Men will wriggle and twist, and mystify the inspired Words of God, until they make them teach anything, and especially if their doctrine can deny to the blessed Lord the glory of the Names He bears and the offices He fills, and that, as in this case, in the face of the fullest and plainest evidence.

The prophecy of Daniel, and the angel's message, speak of a definite period of sixty-nine weeks, or 483 prophetic years, reckoned from a given date, March 14th, B.C. 445—at the close of which "Messiah" would appear, not as an infant, or a worker of miracles, or a preacher and teacher, but as "the Prince." There was one occasion—and only one—when this occurred. That was on the last week of His ministry, when He presented Himself to the people of Jerusalem as the "Son of David, the King of Israel, that cometh in the Name of the Lord." The Divinely appointed "Prince" had come, and the rulers and people must make their choice of or against Him. "The whole multitude of His disciples" acclaimed Him, and the temple children sang "Hosanna" (Matt. xxi. 15); but the Pharisees and rulers objected, and finally rejected their King, who, according to the fulfilment of the Word, "Behold thy King cometh to thee" (Zech. ix. 9), had presented Himself "just and having salvation," according

to the prophet's word. It was on that eventful day that the Lord, looking toward the royal city, in which His throne would have been set up, uttered the words, "If thou hadst known on THIS (thy) DAY (R.V.) the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes." And as can be proved by any who are willing to reckon it, that day brought to a close exactly the sixty-nine prophetic years, of 173,880 days.*

The People of the Prince.

Following the Messiah's cutting off or death, the next word is, "and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." Care has to be taken in distinguishing between "Messiah the Prince" and the "prince that shall come." And the words used further mark a distinction between this coming prince and his "people." The prince yet to come, is the last head of the Roman empire, who has already been introduced to us in chapter vii. as the "little horn," and whom Revelation xiii. designates as "the beast," who, energised in Satan's power, and endowed by Satan's authority, becomes the last ruler of the Roman world. It was "the people" of this coming prince who were to "come and destroy the city and the sanctuary." And this came to pass in the year A.D. 70, when Titus and his army "compassed" the city, as the Lord said would be (Luke xxi. 20-24), and not a stone was left above another of the temple (Matt. xxiv. 2), in which they had boasted. According to the parable, the king, whose son had been dishonoured (Matt. xxii. 1-7), "sent forth his armies and burned up their city." Thus, in awful reality, were the prophetic words fulfilled—"the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war by desolations" (margin), or "the desolations:

* This reckoning will be found in "The Coming Prince," page 128.

determined." For over eighteen centuries, Jerusalem as "trodden down of the Gentiles," pillaged, assaulted, besieged, stands as a witness to all men of the "severity of God" (Rom. xi. 22), which must come sooner or later upon all who slight and despise His beloved Son, and despise that Name which is above every other name.

A Long Interval.

Between verses 26 and 27, there comes in a long interval, which we now know has lasted well-nigh two thousand years. During this period the earthly people are scattered, and their history as a nation has ceased. The stream of prophetic events has been interrupted, and will continue to be until its close. The clock of prophecy stopped when the Jewish people were "broken off," and it will not resume its course until they are again "grafted in" (Rom. xi. 17-24), and appear in their national character in their land. The present dispensation has intervened, concerning which no details are given in the Book of Daniel. This interval is referred to in many portions of the Word. In his address at the council, held in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts xv., Simeon, or Peter, refers to it in verses 14-16, where he characterises the present period of the Gospel's triumphs among the Gentiles, as God taking out of them a people "for His Name." This is the Church. And when this has been completed, he goes on to tell of God resuming His dealings with the earthly people: "After this, I will return and build the tabernacle of David which has fallen down." In like manner, the Lord Jesus, in Luke xxi., after telling of the destruction of the city and temple in Jerusalem, and the scattering of the Jewish people "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," passes on to refer to events which are yet in the future. For nothing that has happened from that period until the

present, answers to the predictions then made. When this is seen, all attempts at "harmonising" such Scriptures with the history of the past nineteen centuries will be rejected. For not until the Jews are again in their own land and city, and there recognised as a nation, with a polity and worship, can these things take place.

The Return of the Jews of Palestine.

The one week still awaiting its fulfilment cannot begin until (1) the present dispensation of God's grace, of the Spirit's presence, and the Church's outcalling ends, and the Lord has come to take His heavenly people away from earth; and (2) until the Jews return to their land, receive recognition as a nation there, with their temple re-built, and their feasts resumed. The two tribes that were in the land when the Lord Jesus came among them at Bethlehem, and was rejected by "His own" (John i. 11), will be allowed to return to Palestine in unbelief. The ten tribes who were carried away 700 years before Christ came, will not at this time be restored to the land. They were not involved in the murder of the Son of God, nor in the rejection of the Spirit's testimony to the dead and risen Lord, as "the Jews" were. The two companies are distinguished by the names of Israel (or Ephraim) and Judah (see Ezek. xxxvii.), but Daniel's prophecy only applies to Judah and Jerusalem. Other prophets—notably Isaiah and Ezekiel—foretell the restoration of the ten tribes,* who will be dealt with by God and converted *before* they return to the land, or on their way toward it (see Ezek. xx. 34-38; Amos ix. 9-10), there to be united with Judah, to become one nation, with one king (Ezek. xxxvii. 22-24). But the two tribes are to be dealt with *in* the land, and as Ezek. xii.-xiv. tells, converted while in and around Jerusalem. So that they must return there in unbelief. And this is what the Word

tells us will happen. The land is ready for them, and many of the Jewish people are longing to reach it, as is manifest in the present day movement known as "Zionism." They only wait for a favourable opportunity to have their national aspirations fulfilled. How, when, and by what means God will permit their return, Scripture does not tell us. It may be as the result of some great European war, in which the Turks, who presently govern Palestine, will lose their hold on it, or it may be accomplished by diplomacy or political intrigue, or for money—for the Jews, as a people, are much sought unto for their wealth. Time alone will tell, and we need not guess. When they do return, it will be as "replenished" in wealth, with their "land full of silver and gold," and alas! with "idols" (Isa. ii. 6-8), there to be purged from their "dross" as in a "furnace," in which the Lord, in His retributive wrath, "blows upon them in the fire," until they are melted (Ezek. xxii. 19-22). So severe will their fiery trial be, that only a third of them will survive it, and two-thirds will perish (Ezek. xiii. 8-9). They will then be in their land, thinking themselves well established, and in safety there, "with many cleaving to them with flatteries" (chap. xi. 34). Then the darkest hour of their history will come upon them, and the events of which Matthew xxiv. 15-30, Luke xxi. 25-28, and Rev. chapters vi.-xix. speak, will be fulfilled.

The Seventieth Week.

When the earthly people are again recognised in their national character in their land, a certain "prince," named in verse 26, who is yet "to come," or, as the words literally read, "the Prince: the Coming One," is said in verse 27 to "confirm a covenant with many for one week." This is referred to in Isa. xxviii. 18 as "an agreement with hell," and will possibly be a treaty made by the last great

Gentile monarch of the Roman earth, who will be then in power—a power received from Satan (Rev. xiii. 2), and negotiated by his Jewish representative and prophet, *the* Antichrist, who will exercise his authority (Rev. xiii. 12) and act in his name. This treaty may be to ensure their protection from the Assyrian, or king of the north, who threatens to invade their land (see Ezek. xxxviii.-xxxix., with chap. xi. 40). Then with smooth and flattering words he will undertake to give them liberty to worship in their temple, and celebrate their feasts. This covenant he will make with “many,” that is, with the greater part of the Jewish people. But there will be some, although as compared with the multitude they are only “a remnant” (and are so named in Isa. x. 20-21), who will not acquiesce in this “agreement with hell,” but keep themselves free from participation in it; and God recognises their faithfulness to the light they have, and gives them more, as is ever His way. We read much of the experience of this people in the Psalms, and a strange experience it is. For they only know the God of their fathers, and upon Him they call (see Psa. x.) in their exercise of soul, groping after the light. The treaty which had been made by and with *the* Antichrist, who is acting as the Roman Emperor’s representative, welcomed by the bulk of the Jewish people as their Messiah, will be respected by him for only half the period for which it has been made. He breaks it at the end of three and a half years, comes out in his true character as a tyrant, setting up an image of the Beast-Emperor in the Holy Place of the temple at Jerusalem, and demanding that all worship it, at the same time causing the Jewish worship and sacrifices to cease. All over the Roman earth he has already secured worshippers for the image of the Beast (see Rev. xiii. 15-17), and blotted out the Name of Jesus from the creeds and religions of

Christendom Now he wants to blot out the Name of the God of the Jews from the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel. And God will allow him to succeed with the many, while He will preserve in the midst of the apostasy a remnant for Himself.

Idolatry Re-established in Jerusalem.

Since the return from Babylon, in Ezra and Nehemiah's time, the Jewish people have been free from idolatry. Their condition is described by the Lord in the words of Matt. xii. 43-45. The unclean spirit of idolatry has gone out from them as a people, but though swept and garnished, they are empty: they have no Christ. In their "last state," which will become history at the period we are now considering, the spirit of idolatry will re-enter in seven-fold power, to permanently dwell in that "generation," so that their future will be worse than their past. When upon the battlements shall be "the idols of the desolator" (ver. 27, margin), or, "upon the wing of abominations," shall come one that "maketh desolate" (R.V.); in other words, when Antichrist's idolatrous image of his Imperial Master is set up in the temple, and Divine honours and worship claimed for it (see 2 Thess. ii. 4), and evidently rendered by the majority, then God sends forth, or permits "the desolator" to do his awful work upon the sinning people. They will be subjected to a double fire from the Assyrian, who is "the rod of God's anger" (Isa. x. 5) from without, and to the treachery of Antichrist within. And then begins "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. xxx. 4-7), and of the Great Tribulation. For no unbiased reader can doubt, that it is of this time and these events that our Lord speaks in Matt. xxiv. 15-21, where He quotes from this very chapter, and gives instruction what His people of that time are to do, when they see the

abomination spoken of by Daniel, the prophet, stand in "the holy place." The last half of this seventieth week of three and a half years, is elsewhere reckoned as twelve hundred and sixty days (Rev. xii. 6), and as forty and two months (Rev. xiii. 5). How soon these events may be actual experiences, none can tell. The Jews are eagerly looking for a "Messiah," and the great world is waiting for "the coming Man," who is expected to be their Deliverer from all their sorrows, and the Healer of all their woes. Happy it is for those who already know the Son of God as their personal Saviour, and are looking for Him to come from heaven to receive them unto Himself in heavenly glory. For to all who belong to Christ the word of promise is sure: "I also will keep thee from (out of) the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. iii. 10).

Chapter X.

The Prophet's Final Vision. The Heavenly Messengers and the Conflict.

THE last three chapters contain the final vision given to the aged prophet, and it has more detail in it than either of those that preceded it, giving minute account of events connected with Daniel's people, part of which have been fulfilled since the date of the vision, and part of which are yet in the future.

The third year of Cyrus is the time given in verse 1, and the prophet is found by the great river of Hiddekel, or Tigris, on the twenty-fourth day of the first month. He had been mourning and fasting for three full weeks before this, in deep exercise of soul before God. Things had changed since the time of his prayer in chapter ix. A decree had been issued by Cyrus, the Persian king, giving liberty to the Jews of the captivity to return to Jerusalem and build the temple there (Ezra 1-2); and a certain number had already gone up from Babylon, full of joy and hope at their deliverance (see Psalms cxxii.-cxxvi.) But Daniel was not among them. Why? The Scripture does not inform us. We are told that he held office in connection with the State "until" the first year of Cyrus (chap. i. 21). After that, he seems to have gone into retirement. But he is still deeply exercised on behalf of his people, and here he is seen chastening his soul, and dealing with God on their account. There are times in

the history of God's servants, and in the condition of His people, when more effectual service can be rendered by prayer than in preaching. Daniel had seen a partial answer to his prayer in the return of a small number of the captives, but he longed to know when and how they would be established in their national character in their land. And "a thing was revealed unto Daniel" in answer to his deeper exercises of soul, "and the thing was true, even a great warfare" (R.V.). The import of this expression comes out in this chapter, in so far as it concerned Daniel personally, and in the following chapters, as it affected his people nationally. A remarkable change is found in Daniel's own condition here, as contrasted with chapter vii. 28, where the revelations given "much troubled" him, and in chapter viii. 27, where he "fainted and was sick." Here the words are: "he *understood* the thing and had understanding of the vision," for the heavenly messenger had been sent, in answer to his prayer, to give him "understanding" (verses 11-14). When God teaches, and the saint learns, there is peace.

Heavenly Messengers Appear.

Gabriel had already twice been sent to comfort and strengthen the prophet (see chap. viii. 16; ix. 21). Here another heavenly visitant appears in the form of a man, yet with a body and countenance which can only be described in the language of symbols, reminding us of Revelation i. 15-17, where the glorified Lord, as "One like unto the Son of Man," appears to the exiled apostle John in Patmos. We must not allow imagination or speculation to intrude in thinking and speaking of a subject like this, concerning which God has left much in mystery. Was "the Man" the same Being as appeared to Abraham in Mamre (Gen. xviii. 2), who is named in

verse 33, "the Lord"? And was the form which appears in this and other places in the Old Testament a Theophany of the Son of God, before His incarnation? There is manifestly a distinction between the first heavenly visitor and Gabriel, who had preceded, and others who followed. The effect upon Daniel was wonderful. He was prostrated before the heavenly form, his comeliness turned to corruption, and his strength went from him. Such was the effect upon Job when he was brought into the Divine presence (Job. xlii. 5-6), and upon John, as he fell at the Lord's feet as one dead (Rev. i. 17). Daniel learns here, that while God had seen his deep exercise of heart, and heard his prayer from "the first day"—a comfort surely to all who so pray—the answer had been delayed for three weeks by an opposing power. Who had withstood the heavenly message? Who was the bearer of it? And here for a moment the veil is drawn aside, which hides the spirit world from our view, and we are permitted to see that there are invisible forces at work behind those that are seen in mortal flesh, "principalities and powers" (Eph. vi. 12) of evil, who oppose what God is doing, and hinder those whom God is using to fulfil His purposes on this earth. "The prince of the kingdom of Persia," who withstood God's message to Daniel, was a wicked spirit, who, under Satan, controlled the affairs of the Persian kingdom, and his minions yet control and are "the world rulers of this darkness" (Eph. vi. 12, R.V.) of the "present evil age," which is ruled by Satan as its prince, and owned as its "god" (2 Cor. iv. 4). Solemn it is to learn that he has the authority and glory of the world-kings at his disposal—as he told the Lord in the temptation (Luke iv. 5-6, R.V.)—and that he is able to urge on and drive their rulers at his will. And he is able also to "hinder," by means of the opposition he stirs up against

them, the servants of God in their work (1 Thess. ii. 18). But there are helpers as well as hinderers in the spirit world, "angels that excel in strength . . . hearkening unto the voice" (Psa. ciii. 20) from the Eternal Throne. Here their services come into view. "Michael, one of the chief princes"—named in the New Testament "Michael the Archangel" (Jude 9)—who, wherever he is named, is seen in close association with the Jewish people, and "stands up" for them (chap. xii. 1, with Rev. xii. 7) against their foes, is here seen espousing the prophet's cause, and helping the messenger who bore the message of God to him.

The message to Daniel was what shall befall his people in the "latter days"—not for days long past, but for days yet future, elsewhere named "the time of the end" and "the last end of the indignation"—words which settle the scope of this final vision. And thus instructed, and afterwards "strengthened" (verse 18), the prophet is prepared to hear of "that which is noted in the Scripture of Truth" (verse 21). And this is the message of the next chapter.

Chapter XI.

The Pre-written History of Daniel's People. The Conflicts. The Final Struggle.

THE visions of the Book of Daniel, although each complete in itself, do not follow in strict chronological order. The vision of the image in chapter ii. carries us on to the time when Gentile dominion comes to its end, and the kingdom of God is set up on earth. So also does the vision of the four beasts in chapter vii. No subsequent vision reaches beyond this, yet each fresh revelation from God to His servant adds fresh circumstances and details in answer to his inquiries and his prayers. In the present chapter, there is much of such detail made known to Daniel, no longer in the language of symbols, but in plain and definite statements concerning actual persons and countries. The history here given is not that of all Gentile nations, but only of such as are territorially related to Palestine. This is seen in the manner in which certain kings are described, as "king of the north," and "king of the south," Palestine being geographically the centre from which God reckons. The former is Syria, and the latter Egypt, two countries which have had much to do with God's people, Israel, in the past, and are yet to play an important part in the events of the future. For the land that lies between them is yet to be the scene of the greatest assembling of armies that the world will ever see (Rev. xvi. 14-16), and of the last great

conflict between the powers of heaven and hell. It would neither be profitable, for us as here assembled, nor possible, with the time at our disposal, to follow the detail of events in this chapter. There are books by able authors which may be consulted by those who desire to do so.* As might be expected, students of prophecy differ regarding some of them, certain writers seeing the greater part as already fulfilled, while others mark a break—some at verse 5, and others at verse 33—at which the consecutive history ceases, and a long interval comes in—as in former visions—the history passing on at this point to that which is to befall Daniel's people “in the latter days,” as the heavenly messenger had spoken (chap. x. 14).

Outlines of the Chapter.

While not attempting to trace the whole, some outstanding points may be briefly noted. Verse 2 begins the history. The “three kings of Persia” are named in the Book of Ezra as Ahasuerus (chap. iv. 6), Artaxerxes (verses 7-13), and Darius (chap. v. 14) (who is the Ahasuerus of Esther i. 1-5). These kings had to do with the returned captives, who built the temple, the city, and the walls of Jerusalem. And with them the Bible chronology ends, and all that is known of the fulfilment of the subsequent verses must be gathered from secular history. In verses 21-35 some see the pre-written history of Antiochus Epiphanes, who was the greatest persecutor of the Jewish people, a “vile person,” who assailed Jerusalem, desecrated the temple, sacrificed a sow on the altar, and set up an idol, commanding all to worship it. This is regarded by many writers as “the abomination of desolation” referred to in Daniel's

* We commend a recent little handbook entitled “The Sure Word of Prophecy,” by C. S. R., in which these predictions, and their fulfilment in history, are noted in much detail.

prophecies. But while Antiochus and his deeds may rightly be regarded as a striking foreshadowing of the Antichrist who is yet to come, they cannot be accepted as the final fulfilment of the prophecy. For it was many years after the time of Antiochus that our Divine Lord, who knew all things, gave warning and instruction regarding “the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” as being something still in the future. His words are: “WHEN ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, THEN let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains” (Matt. xxiv. 15-16). The time of Antiochus was indeed a dark hour for Daniel’s people, and for Jerusalem; but there is yet to come, as surely as the Scripture says it, a yet more awful period of trial, under the rule of the Antichrist, their false Messiah, “a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation” (chap. xii. 1).

The Coming King.

In verse 36, a personage is introduced, as it were, abruptly, without name or notice of whence he comes. He is the Antichrist of the Epistles (1 John ii. 18-22), the second Beast of Rev. xiii. 11, the “false prophet” of Rev. xvi. 13, the “man of sin . . . and son of perdition” of 2 Thess. ii. 3. Here he appears as exercising the rights of “king” in the land of Israel, under his Kaiser, the great ruler of the Roman earth, deceiver of Christendom, persecutor of the Jews, simulator of Christ, opponent of God, and tool of Satan. His character and his creed are here described. He does according to his own will, he exalts himself above every God, he blasphemes the God of heaven, regards not the God of Israel, has respect for neither God nor man, but magnifies himself above all. But

verse 38 hints, that although thus great in his own eyes, he is an idolator, for he has his own idol, a war-god, "a god whom his fathers knew not," and him he honours. As to his followers—"Whosoever acknowledgeth him, he shall increase with glory" (R.V.), as the devil glorifies and enriches those who serve him now, and oppose the Gospel and truth of God: they have places of rule and "the land" divided among them as reward. But while this great enemy of God, and all that is of Him on earth, "prosper, till the indignation is accomplished" (verse 36)—that is, until God has used him as a whip wherewith to chastise His erring covenant people, his end, like that of all who oppose God, will be inglorious.

Three Opposing Kings.

Further details of the conflicts awaiting "the time of the end" are given in verses 40-45. The kings, here named as being of the north and south, do not necessarily mean the same individuals as those so named in the early part of this chapter. There are evidently three kings here in "the time of the end," each opposed to one another, and all against the Jewish people in their land. First, a "king of the south," ruling Egypt and other lands now held by the Sultan, "pushes against" Antichrist, evidently with little success; then "the king of the north," whose jealousy has been excited, comes with an immense army and navy, and "like a whirlwind," sweeps over many countries, entering "the glorious land," and pressing on south to Egypt, showing, that this northern king is no ally, but an enemy of the "king of the south." But in the midst of his conquests, "tidings out of the east, and out of the north, trouble him." Is some other warrior nation invading his own land? Or, what is more likely, is it that he fears the land of Israel, north and east of Egypt, may elude his grasp?

He turns again to Palestine, "planting the tabernacles of his palaces" between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas. And there he comes to his end, we believe, at the hand of the Lord, and his great army is utterly destroyed. There seems to be an allusion to this unrecorded catastrophe in Ezek. xxxviii.-xxxix., where the great army of the north (ver. 14-15), led on by the Prince of *Rosh, enters "the land of unwall'd villages" (ver. 11), where God cuts off them all, save a sixth (ver. 2). So awful is the carnage, that it takes seven months to bury the dead, and they are supplied with firewood for seven years in the weapons of the slain (ver. 11-15). "The king" goes to Tophet, which the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, kindles (Isa. xxx. 30-33). And as Rev. xix. 20 tells us, the beast and the false prophet, the Roman Emperor, and Antichrist the false Messiah, are cast alive into "the lake of fire." Thus these three, each in his own way God's enemy, the devil's tool, and the oppressor of Israel, are taken alive and red-handed in their rebellion, and sent speedily, without tasting death, to their doom.

Chapter XII.

The Great Tribulation. Michael's Intervention.
Final Deliverance. Daniel's Rest and Portion.

THE period here in view is the seventieth week, especially its latter half. The covenant made with the Jews had been broken, Antichrist becomes their oppressor, and the northern army has entered their land. The darkest hour of their history is now upon them—"a time of trouble as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time" (R.V.). It is to this same period that the Lord refers, and concerning which He gives fuller details in Matt. xxiv. 21. It must be remembered that the great tribulation is not an experience through which the Church, or any part of it will pass. Daniel was told who were to be the sufferers. They were "the children of his people." And the prophet Jeremiah calls it "the time of Jacob's trouble" (chap. xxx. 7). Whatever trials and tribulations Christians may have to share, they can have no part in this, for they will be glorified with Christ in heaven before it begins.

The Causers of the Great Tribulation.

Revelation xii. 7 tells of a war in heaven, in which the devil is cast out, and his angels with him. Then he persecutes the earthly people, who had heard and received the Gospel of the kingdom (Matt. xxiv. 14). Nations that have not heard of Christ before (Isa. lxvi. 19), come out of "the tribulation" to stand before the throne (Rev.

vii. 9-14, R.V.). Not those who had heard of, but rejected Him—for them no “second chance” is reserved, but “strong delusion” (2 Thess. ii. 11) will be sent by God, in retributive judgment for their unbelief. The period of the tribulation is said to be 1260 days, or three and a half years. It is “shortened” in mercy, for the preservation of the “elect,” who are in the midst of it. Its close will be sudden, by the personal return of the Lord to the land in which the fury of the storm rages, His feet actually standing on Olivet (Zech. xiv. 4). He goes forth as a warrior (Rev. xix. 11), His glorified saints accompanying Him, and the hostile armies of the Beast, led by himself, will receive at the hand of the Mighty Victor, Calvary’s Lamb, and Judah’s Lion, their final defeat, and the royal city, evidently already in the hands of the allied conquerors, and its people their prisoners, will be “delivered” and freed from its long degradation as “trodden down of the Gentiles.” It will then become a “quiet habitation” (Isa. xxxiii. 20), its warfare being accomplished (Isa. xl. 2), built upon its own heap (Jer. xxx. 18), “the city of the Great King,” beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth (Psa. xlviii. 2). For three and a half years (ver. 14), this awful scourge of Satanic power continues. There will be “great tribulation,” as our Lord speaks in Matthew xxiv. Satan will be its chief instigator (Rev. xii. 15). Antichrist, who is his instrument, energised by his power (2 Thess. ii. 9; Rev. xiii. 12), will be acting for him—first in deception, next in persecution. He is permitted by God to continue his awful work of extermination for a season, then the Divine arm interposes. In heaven, Michael, the archangel, stands up for the oppressed covenant people, and the results of his intervention appear on earth. There comes into view a people in the midst of this time of unparalleled tribulation,

who will call upon God's Name, and He will hear them, and answer by saying, "It is My people" (Zech. xiii. 8-9). The deep exercises of this people, and many of their prayers, are recorded in the Psalms. They ask vengeance for their enemies (see Psa. lxix. 24). The Gospel of the kingdom will go forth during the first part of the seventieth week, and many, by means of it, will be brought to God, not to become part of the Church, but to become a nucleus of the earthly people whom God will again bring into the place of witnesses for Him in the world. Rev. vii. 4 tells of 144,000 of the twelve tribes sealed and secured during this period. And Rev. xiv. shows them all—"those that shall be found written in the book" (ver. 1)—safely through it, standing with "the Lamb" on Mount Zion. A numberless throng of Gentiles, also, out of all nations, appear as having "come out" of it (Rev. vii. 14).

A Resurrection Scene.

Verse 2 tells of a resurrection scene. What resurrection is it? It is not "the resurrection of the just" (Luke xiv. 14), and of life (John v. 29), which only the dead in Christ (1 Thess. iv. 16) shall share. There are two classes named, some awakening to life, and some to shame. The Scripture has nothing to say of a "general resurrection." It is not a bodily, but a spiritual resurrection. The Jews are looked upon at present as those that "dwell in dust" (Isa. xxvi. 19), but who are yet to "arise and sing." Their restoration is to be as "life from the dead" (Rom. xi. 18). In two very remarkable chapters, Ezek. xxxvi.-xxxvii., we get the restoration, resurrection, and re-union of Israel foretold. These ten tribes are not "lost"—God knows where they are. During their absence, they are reckoned by God, as the prodigal of Luke xv., to be "dead." He will "gather them out of all countries," and

bring them into their "own land" (chap. xxxvi. 24). They are likened in chap. xxxvii. to an open valley, full of "dry bones," into which the Lord breathes life. And these bones, says the prophet, are "the whole house of Israel," of whom God says: "I will open your graves and cause you to come out of your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you: and I shall place you in your own land" (chap. xxxvii. 12). There they will be re-united with those of the two tribes which had passed through the tribulation, and been "purged, made white, and tried." Some are here especially mentioned, who had been "wise," and had "turned many to righteousness," part of them being slain for their testimony (chap. xi. 33). Now they are to have their reward, and will "shine as the stars" for ever.

The Final Word to Daniel.

The words of verse 4, addressed to Daniel, "shut up the words and seal the book even to the time of the end," repeat that the yet unfulfilled portions of the prophecy were for a distant day. When we turn to the closing words of the Book of Revelation, we find John being there addressed at the close of his great visions of judgment and of glory, but the contrast is very marked. To Daniel the word was "seal the book," to John "seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for *the time is at hand*" (chap. xxii. 10). To us upon whom the end of the ages has come, the prophetic Word is an open secret: Christ has been here, redemption has been accomplished, the living Victor is on the throne, the Comforter is here in and with the saints, and the whole Book of God, the entire revelation of His purposes is in our hands. To Daniel's people the Book is still shut up, for the veil of unbelief is on their eyes, but to the saint walking with God, the sure Word of prophecy is as "a lamp shining in a dark place" (2 Pet.

i. 19). May we each learn from God how to use it aright.

Glimpses of heavenly beings, questions asked and answered, events already mentioned repeated in greater fulness of detail, bearing on the various periods named in the prophecy relating to Israel's foes follow. And then the establishment of the coming kingdom of God, the time of Israel's blessing and of the world's release, when under the peaceful rule of their once-rejected, but at last welcomed and adored Messiah-king, Daniel's people and God's Israel shall bask in the healing beams of the Sun of righteousness. And the now weary world, groaning for deliverance from the tyrant's yoke, shall learn after her long, long ages of sin and sorrow, that her true King and Ruler is the One who once stood on her soil as a Homeless Stranger, without a place to lay His head, now by God highly exalted, bearing the universal sceptre, whose Name shall endure for ever, and whose kingdom shall never end.

To the aged prophet, the man greatly beloved, upon whose life-story no blot appears, the final word came—and sweet it must have been to his soul, as he stood in view of the river, with the heavenly messengers conversing on its banks, far beyond earth's troubled scenes—"Go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." And to us of the present hour, so dark with evil, yet so bright with hope, the word is, "Yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come and shall not tarry" (Heb. x. 37, R.V.).

"A little while," Thou hast declared,
 And *Faith's* long trial will be past;
 Each waiting heart, by *Hope* prepared,
 Shall spring to welcome Thee at last.
 Then *Love*, maintaining constant sway,
 O'er early pupils in her school,
 Shall triumph through that glorious day,
 And endless *Praise* attest her rule."

Supplementary Notes, With Answers to Questions on Prophetic Subjects.

NOTE A.—THE WARS OF KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

German Rationalists, and their British and American disciples, seek to discredit the Book of Daniel by insinuating that history contradicts what is here written. But this is mere assertion. A simple reader of God's Word, who has "no axe to grind," and no theory to maintain, finds all to be harmonious. The history of Judah and Jerusalem had been chequered and stormy, from the time of the revolt of the ten tribes, in the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon's son. They soon became mixed with the idolatry of the nations around them, and some 250 years later, were carried captive into Assyria (2 Kings xvii. 20-23).

The two tribes that remained loyal to the house of David soon fell into decay, but by means of reformations wrought by several godly kings, their testimony to the true God continued a little over a century longer. Josiah, the last king of Judah, who had effected a return of part of the people to God and His Word, became entangled with Babylon's king in a war with Pharaoh Necho, which cost him his life, and brought about the long threatened final dissolution of the Royal house. The victorious Egyptian king, on his return, came to Jerusalem, deposed Jehohaz, and placed his brother on the throne of Judah, as his vassal, changing his name to Jehoiakim. In

the third year after these things had been accomplished, Nebuchadnezzar, who was then crown prince of Babylon,—his father, Nabopolassar, being still on the throne—led his army into Judea and captured Jerusalem, leaving Jehoiakim, whom he had taken prisoner, as his representative in Jerusalem, the conqueror returning hastily, and taking back with him to the Chaldean capital part of the holy vessels of Jehovah's temple, and certain young princes, of whom Daniel was one. Five years after the first invasion, Nebuchadnezzar returned and besieged the city (see 2 Kings xxiv. 11-16), carrying all the princes, warriors, and craftsmen to Babylon, leaving only a few of the poorest of the people to look after the vines and husbandry. The third, and final assault is described in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17-21. This was the end of rule in Judah, and from then till now "the times of the Gentiles" have run their course.

NOTE B.—THE MEDES AND PERSIANS.

The Medes, who were an ancient people, sprang from Madai, Japheth's son (Gen. x. 2), and had already shown themselves in warfare against the Babylonian and Assyrian kingdoms, during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and his two successors. The Medes were a growing power, and a war-like people, and joining with the Persians, who were a comparatively modern nation, they were led to battle by Cyrus, who had appeared as a leader of men. In this war Nabonidus, the king of Babylon, took part, leaving his royal city in the hands of Belshazzar, his son, who occupied his time in debauchery and revelry, culminating in the idolatrous banquet recorded in Daniel, chapter v. His father was defeated by Cyrus, and shut up in Borsippa, one of his strongholds, while the victorious army invested Babylon. By diverting the

course of the river Euphrates, which flowed through the city, the Medo-Persian leader had only to wait the falling of the waters, which took place on the very night that the handwriting appeared on the palace wall. Under cover of darkness of the night, the Medo-Persians passed along the well-nigh dry channel of the Euphrates, and on "that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." And as the Scripture informs us, "Darius the Mede took (received) the kingdom." For a time the Medes had the upper hand, but like the symbolic figure of the bear, which raised itself up on one side, the Persians became the stronger, and the name of Cyrus, henceforward, becomes the expression of the Medo-Persian rule (see *Ezra* i. 1-3). There was but "one dominion," the two becoming united, which is a striking contrast to the Grecian and Roman empires that followed, which began united and became divided.

NOTE C.—THE DIVISIONS OF ALEXANDER'S EMPIRE.

In chapter viii. 3-14, the prophet sees a He-goat with a notable horn between his eyes, who, in the interpretation (ver. 21) is said to be "the king of Persia." This "great horn was broken, and *for it* came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven," which are said to represent "four kingdoms which shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power." The same four-fold division is intimated in chapter vii. 6, and referred to in chapter xi. 4. It is a matter of well-authenticated history that after the death of Alexander the Great, his empire was divided among his four generals, and that four separate kingdoms were formed out of it. Ptolemy possessed Egypt and parts of Asia Minor; Cassander had Macedonia and Greece; Lysimachus, Thrace, with parts of Bithynia and Phrygia; Seleucus, all the rest. It is out-

of one of these four parts of Alexander's empire that one was to arise in the latter time of these "kingdoms," whose power was to extend "towards the pleasant land," and who would become a destroyer of "the holy people." The prophecy had a partial fulfilment, no doubt, in Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian king, who was an oppressor and persecutor of the Jews in the time of the Maccabees, when the whole land was devastated, and over 100,000 of the people massacred, but the final fulfilment awaits a yet future day.

NOTE D.—THE COMING ROMAN EMPIRE.

The words of Revelation xvii. 8 (R.V.), regarding the Roman Empire, symbolised by Daniel's fourth beast, are—"The beast that thou sawest *was*, and *is not*, and *is about to come* up out of the abyss and to go into perdition." The first of these four stages is past, the second is present, and the third and fourth are future. It arose about B.C. 31, and became divided into Eastern and Western portions A.D. 364. After a chequered career, the Roman dominion ceased with the life of the last of the Constantines, A.D. 1453, and Constantinople, the Eastern capital, passed under the Moslem rule. But Scripture informs us that it is to be revived and reconstructed in a ten-kingdom form, represented by the ten toes of the great image in Daniel ii., by the ten horns on the head of the fourth beast in chapter vii., and in Rev. xvii. 3, 8, 12, by a scarlet coloured beast with seven heads and ten horns, whose origin is out of the pit, invested with the devil's "power, and his throne, and his great authority" (Rev. xiii. 2), bearing a royal diadem (Rev. xii. 3, xiii. 1) which belongs by right to the "King of kings" (Rev. xix. 12-16) alone. As to the countries which will be included in this last Roman-world Empire

Scripture is silent, and guesses on such subjects are unwarrantable. A great European war might quickly change the map of Europe, and bring countries beyond it, but within the scope of the Roman Empire of the past, into close relationship with the Great Powers. And it has to be remembered that five of the ten have to be sought in what was the Eastern portion of the Roman Empire of the past, and five in the west, half on each foot, according to the symbol of the ten "toes of the feet" (chap. ii. 41) of Daniel's image. And the prophet's point of view may not be—as is usually reckoned—the Adriatic, but more likely Jerusalem, the centre of the entire sphere of prophecy. But whether the kingdoms to be included are exactly those of the past, territorially, or ten kingdoms as they will exist at the time when the Beast arises out of the sea (Rev. xiii. 1), may well be left as matters concerning which it is best not to dogmatize. When the time draws near, the vision will be plain to him that readeth. That there will be vast changes among European nations we may surely expect, but the formation of the ten kingdoms, and their heading up under one great Ruler, *cannot* become history, until the heavenly people have been removed from earth, the earthly covenant people restored to their land, and the last great confederacy of evil takes its final form.

NOTE E.—THE GERMANIC EMPIRE.

Certain writers on prophecy have sought to show that the ten kingdoms of Daniel's prophecy, and the ten kings of John's vision, have already had their fulfilment in the various tribes and peoples who established themselves in Mid-Europe, especially in Germany, during the fifth and beginning of the sixth centuries. But this cannot be accepted, for the following among many reasons. These

tribes occupied only the Western half of what was the Roman Empire—Palestine and the Jews, which form the central objects of this period, are left out. No ten kings, acting together, gave their dominion to one great emperor (see Rev. xvii. 13-14), nor has such a ruler ever made a seven year covenant with the Jewish people. Neither among the German peoples nor among other European nations has a ten kingdom confederacy been seen, answering in any degree to the prophetic Word—so we conclude that these kingdoms are yet in the future, and that when they appear, *this* will be their distinctive mark—that their kings rule, with and under the Beast, “for one hour” (Rev. xvii. 12). As is known to all who are acquainted with ancient history, only a part of the Germany of to-day was included in the Roman Empire at the time of Augustus, its boundary, roughly, being the line of the Rhine and Danube rivers.

NOTE F.—THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

When the Baptist announced “the kingdom of heaven” as “at hand,” the Jewish people in their land, to whom that announcement was made, would naturally connect it with that kingdom which “the God of heaven” was to set up, a subject with which they were well acquainted. It was the prophecy of Daniel about to be fulfilled. The ministry of the twelve was summed up in the words, “As ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. x. 5-8). But the leaders of the Jewish people opposed the message, and in Matt. xii. openly rejected Christ as Messiah, and connected his mission with Beelzebub. Then He turned to other subjects, which, in the following chapter, are named “the *mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven” (ver. 11). And the seven parables which He uttered, as recorded in that chapter, altered the whole

aspect of the kingdom during the present age. The whole seven of these parables clearly show that the kingdom, as it is spoken of by the prophets, and sung of in the Psalms, to be administered in power and glory by Christ, as King, reigning in Jerusalem on the throne of David (Luke i. 33), is postponed, while other Scriptures just as clearly tell us that a time will come when all that God has promised will be fulfilled. But the present work of God and His outcalling of the Church must first be completed. "After that" (Acts xv. 16) God will resume the thread of His dealings with the earthly people, as Rom. xi. 24-26 informs us, and the kingdom will "come" as surely as God has said it.

NOTE G.—THE TWO-FOLD USE OF THE WORD "BEAST."

The fact that the word "beast" is used to describe the Roman Empire in its last ten-kingdom form in Rev. xiii. 1, and also its supreme Ruler in verse 4, and again in chap. xvii. 3, where the empire is in view, while in verse 11 it is its Ruler, has caused difficulty to come. In the one case, "the beast" is viewed as the whole system of world government, of which Satan, as the Dragon, is the originator and sustainer, while in the other, the individual who is its head is in view. In the final catastrophe, which brings both to their end, the same term is employed; but the judgment of each is distinguished. In Daniel, chap. vii. 11, the fourth beast is to be "*slain* and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame," as contrasted with "the rest of the beasts"—*i.e.*, kingdoms whose dominions were to be taken from them, but their existence prolonged for a season. But the great Emperor, with his satellite prophet, the Antichrist—called in Rev. xiii. 2 "another beast"—is to be taken and "cast *alive* into the lake of fire"

(Rev. xix. 20), to which also the Devil, who was their master, will follow them (Rev. xx. 10). Thus, these three—the trinity of hell—who had been accomplices in evil, go alive from the scenes of their awful work to their eternal doom.

NOTE H.—WILL THE FOUR GREAT EMPIRES RE-APPEAR?

It has been thought by some that the application of the four symbolic beasts of chapter vii. to the four great empires of Chaldea, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome of the past, does not exhaust its teaching, but is only a partial fulfilment of the prophecy, and that a future and fuller fulfilment is to be expected. That a partial fulfilment of Scripture prophecy, to be followed, it may be, thousands of years later by a complete accomplishment of all that God has spoken, is a well-proved principle of Scripture, none can doubt. There is abundant evidence of this in such passages as 2 Sam. vii. 11-12; Psa. cxxxii. 11, with Luke i. 32; Hos. xi. 1, with Matt. ii. 15; Joel ii. 28-32, with Acts ii. 16-18. So that it may well be that around "the Great Sea"—that is the Mediterranean—which is said to be the territorial scene of the vision of Daniel vii. 2, there may yet arise, simultaneously (ver. 3), four monarchies bordering on that Sea, each having Palestine in part or in whole under its dominion, which ultimately become the ten kingdoms over which the Beast will rule. But it would be futile to forecast when or how this will come. If such is to be, when the time draws near, the vision will be made plain.

NOTE I.—THE RECKONING OF DATES AND ITS RESULTS.

Nothing has more hindered the progress of unprejudiced study of the prophetic Word among Christians than fixing dates for such events as the personal return of the Lord,

the end of the times of the Gentiles, and commencement of the Millennium, by those who claim to have superior knowledge of Scripture, and, in some instances, special "revelations" from heaven. The latter may be laid aside as the hallucinations of distracted or disordered minds. But the former can do more harm to those uninstructed in the Word of God, especially its dispensational teachings. When it is seen that all Scripture chronology centres in Israel, and that "times and seasons" have no part in the hope of the Church (the outcalling of the present dispensation); that during the whole period of Israel's national dispersion and Jerusalem's treading down by the Gentiles, the clock of prophecy is silent and the reckoning of dates in abeyance, and will so continue until the present dispensation reaches its end by the personal return of the Son of God to the air, there to "receive from the world His own," there will be less temptation to turn aside to the reckoning of dates in order to discern when the Lord will come, or—to use the language of the world's religion—when "the Last Day" may be expected. It is the devil's aim to *deny* the Word of God in everything, and where he cannot succeed in this, he seeks to *discredit* it by a false exposition and application of its truths. It is in this branch of his business especially, that he has scored in regard to prophecy.

NOTE J.—THE ASSYRIAN AND THE JEWS.

Assyria, in ancient time, was a great and powerful kingdom. Her lands lay between those of the Chaldeans (or Babylonians) and the land of Palestine, as ruled by David and Solomon. During the short-lived years of Israel's glory, her rulers evidently had to keep quiet, and submit to the more peaceful sceptre of David's house, but as decay and disintegration spread in Israel,

Assyria rose to power and influence. During the reign of the later kings of Israel and Judah, the names of the Assyrian kings, Pul, Tiglath-Pileser, Shalmaneser, Sennacherib, and Esarhaddon occur often, showing the influence exerted by the rule of Assyria on Israel and Judah. Her kings, in turn, became in the hands of God, instruments of Divine chastisement upon His people for their sins, one being named "the hired razor" (Isa. vii. 20), and another "the rod of His anger" (Isa. x. 5). The ten tribes were led into captivity in Assyria. But her power was broken, and there was "no healing of her bruise" (Nah. iii. 19), and there is no mention of her name as a great world-power of the Gentiles in Daniel's prophecy, or in any other part of Scripture. But her future history is clearly written in so far as it is connected with Israel and their land in the future. Her king is introduced in Isaiah x. 12 as one to be punished for his "stout heart" and "high looks" at the time "when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion," and in verses 28-34 an account of the Assyrian advance upon Jerusalem, and of the Divine judgment on this great oppressor—for he is to be broken by the voice of the Lord in the land (Isa. xxx. 31-33). Clearly, then, the Assyrian is to be one of the future enemies of Israel, and will be found as an invader of the land in the day when the One who was the Babe of Bethlehem shall stand in the strength of the Lord, and in the majesty of the Name of Jehovah, His God, as their Deliverer and their Peace (Micah v. 1-7).

NOTE K.—THE HISTORIC INTERPRETATION OF
PROPHECY.

If interpreters of the historic school had merely claimed that certain events of the past come within the scope of

the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, it would be open for each to examine what they advance in the light of Scripture. But when they say that the *fulfilment* of these prophecies is already past, they part company with God's Word altogether, and set aside the dispensational distinctions that it makes. To an unbiased reader, nothing can surely be plainer than that the events of the long section of the Book of Revelation, chapters vi.-xix., are in the future, and that they belong to an age of judgment, and not of grace, as the present is. The calls for vengeance from suffering saints, in the throes of that awful period, are quite in keeping with its character, but wholly "out of it" on the lips of those who are taught to love their enemies, and to "pray for"—not against—those who despitely use them.

The "year day" system of interpretation finds in the "days" of Daniel and Revelation "years," and reckoning according to that principle, finds the prophecies of the Books of Daniel and Revelation to have had their fulfilment throughout the past nineteen centuries. But it has not been *proved* by those who advocate this system—unless, indeed, such references as Numb. xiv. 24, Ezek. iv. 4-6, Luke xiii. 31-32, which they give, are accepted as proofs of it—that such a principle is according to Scripture: and we venture to affirm that it is wholly opposed to it. Statements of time in the following passages—Daniel, chapter vii. 25, with xii. 7, xii. 11, xii. 12; Rev., chapters ix. 5, 10, ix. 15, xii. 14—are incapable of such a meaning. And to apply it to Daniel iv. 16, 23, 32, would reach the absurdity of Nebuchadnezzar's madness extending to 2520 years. The time is stated in verse 28: "All this *came* upon the king." So that the period cannot be other than literal years. Those who assert that the predictions concerning Antichrist *have been* fulfilled in the

Popes ; that the ten-horned beast is the Papacy ; and that Babylon is Papal Rome, have to find in the opening of the sixth seal (see Rev. vi. 12-17), such events as the rout of Pagan kings before the armies of Constantine, their generals and slaves together seeking shelter in dens and crevices of rocks, imploring hills to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Not only does such a principle of interpretation reduce the solemn declarations of God to absurdity, but it makes men scoffers at His warnings.

NOTE L.—THE LOST TEN TRIBES AND THEIR IDENTITY.

A great deal has been written, seeking to make out that the British nation, and especially the children of God in it, are the descendants of the ten lost tribes of Israel. And this "latter house of Israel," according to these writers, has great things in expectation of an earthly and Palestinian order. Suffice it to say, that in so far as born-again Christians, members of the body of Christ are concerned, they have no earthly nationality whatever. They are a heavenly people, whose citizenship is in heaven, from whence they look for the Saviour (Phil. iii. 20, R.V.). Their hope is not a migration to Palestine, but an ascent to heaven in the company of their Lord, when He descends into the air (1 Thess. iv. 16), and the inheritance they look for is not a portion of the land of Israel, but an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, "reserved" for them "in heaven" (1 Pet. i. 4). And with the unconverted it is of little account at present what their nationality is, for the Word has brought in both Jew and Gentile "under sin," and "guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 9-19). When God wants the ten lost tribes of Israel, He knows where to find them and how to bring them into their own land (see Isa. xi. 10-13, xxxii. 12-15, lxvi. 18-21 ; Ezek. xx. 41-42).

NOTE M.—THE RELATION OF RUSSIA TO PROPHECY.

In Ezekiel xxxviii. 1-3, we read "Son of man, set thy face against Gog of (R.V.), the land of Magog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal." The word *Rosh* is said by scholars to be the old proper name of Russia. Gog, is the symbolic term for the Emperor of all the Russias, while Meshech (or Muscovy) and Tubal (or Tobolsk) are the names of the two ancient seats of government or capitals of Russia in Europe and Asia. The desire of Russia for territorial extension is well-known, and in the case of Palestine, the additional desire to acquire the "holy places" to grace her "religion" and minister to her superstition, will impel her vast armies, led on by her then and last emperor, who is Head of the Greek Church as well as of the nation, to sweep down from their "place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army," only to meet their doom at the hand of the Lord. The "Gog and Magog" of Rev. xx. 8 are evidently symbolic terms to describe the vast horde which will make a final assault *after* the Millennial reign.

Questions and Answers.

1. Is the coming of the Lord *to* the air and *for* His people mentioned at all in the Old Testament Scriptures? —No. The apostle says the change of the living, and the elective resurrection of the dead in Christ was a "mystery" (Cor. xv.) which had not then been revealed.

2. Does the Lord's teaching, in **Matt. xxiv. 14-31**, apply to Christians of the present time? If not, to whom?—The Lord's words here can only apply to a people living in Jerusalem and Judea, with a temple re-built, for it is in its "holy place" that the "abomination of desolation" is to appear. And in the corresponding passage in Daniel ix. 24, Gabriel informs Daniel that these things were to be "upon thy people and upon thy holy city." This clearly shows that the words apply to a Jewish people in a future age, living under a different economy from the present time of grace.

3. To what stage of the Lord's returning do the words of Acts i.-ii. refer?—If the words are taken literally—as we think they ought to be—they apply to His appearing when "His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives" (**Zech. xiv. 4**) as Israel's Deliverer.

4. Is there clear Scripture evidence that the Lord's return will precede the Millennium?—Yes, in plenty. Here is one: At His coming His saints are raised, *then* they reign with Christ a thousand years (**Rev. xx. 6**).

5. Are the events recorded in Revelation, chapters vi.-xi., the same as those of Matthew xxiv.?—Evidently, only they cover a wider area; for, while the Lord's words have only in view a people in Judea, the Apocalyptic visions of John include the wider fields of Christendom, which had come into existence later.

6. Will the Church, or any part of it, go through the "great tribulation"?—**Rev. iii. 10**, gives the Lord's own promise to His own that they will be kept *from* that hour. There will be saints on earth *in* it, whom God will bring *through* it (**Rev. viii. 9-17**), but they form no part of the Church, the body of Christ, which had been completed and translated at His coming to the air (**1 Thess. iv. 17**).

7. Can the "trumpets" and "vials" of **Rev. viii.-xv.** be

regarded as fulfilled in events of the past?—Historic interpreters of the Book of Revelation, such as Elliot, Guinness, and others aver, that certain events in the Christian era are their fulfilment, such as the downfall of Paganism in the third century, and the nominal adoption of Christianity as the State religion. But how can this be made to mean the “great day” of the Lamb’s wrath (Rev. vi. 17), or the pouring out of “the wrath of God upon the earth” (Rev. xvi. i.)? Little wonder if sceptics scoff at, and simple folks are confused by such fanciful expositions of God’s truth.

8. Is there any evidence in Scripture that the trials through which the Jews are to pass in days to come, will bring them to repentance?—The words of Hosea v. 15, “In their affliction they shall seek Me early,” surely indicate that their hearts will be softened, yet it will only be when they “look upon” Him whom they have pierced, that their mourning will be general and their repentance deep and real, leading on to their cleansing from sin and separation (Zech. xii. 10-xiii. 2) from idolatry.

9. Is the Antichrist and the False Prophet the same individual?—We believe they are. But the Beast, Christendom’s last great ruler, should not be confounded with *the* Antichrist as he generally is. Revelation xiii. 1 describes the rise and course of “the Beast”—the symbol being thus applied to the Roman Empire of the future; but in ver. 6, with Revelation xvii. 11, the ruler of that Empire is represented by the same symbol. He is the first Beast. A second Beast (ver. 11) of lamb-like appearance, but speaking with a dragon’s voice, a simulator of Christ, but actually the mouthpiece of the devil, appears, and acts before and for his imperial master. This is *the* Antichrist, the Man of Sin, Satan’s masterpiece, the head and leader of his whole system of Satanic deception.

"The Beast"—a word which conveys heaven's estimate of him—is the secular ruler, while Antichrist is the religious head of the coming age. And these two, with the Dragon, whose power they wield, form the trinity of hell—the last great travesty of Father, Son and Spirit, that earth will see.

10. What and where is Armageddon?—The name appears in Rev. xvi. 16 as the place to which, by Satanic power, the armies of the Beast will be gathered, and from thence they will move against Jerusalem. But the Lord's "set time to favour her" (Psa. cii. 13) has come, and as birds flying over their young to protect them, "so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem; He will protect and deliver it" (Isa. xxxi. 5). "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle" (Zech. xiv. 3). And under the very walls of the city, in the valley of Jehoshaphat the power of Heaven will, as in a moment, arrest the onslaught, and the manifested power and glory of the once-rejected Nazarene will confront in awful splendour the rebel host and its proud leader, who, with his satellite prophet, will be hurled alive into the burning lake.

11. What parts of Daniel's prophecies refer to the Millennium?—The kingdom "to be set up" by "the God of heaven" is named in chap. ii. 44, vii. 14-27, but the prophet's message leads only up to the gate, as it were, of the Millennial reign. Other prophets describe it (Isa. xi. 1-9), psalmists sing its glory (Psa. lxii., xcvi.-c.), and in Rev. chap. xx. 2-4, xxi. 9-27, we have a view of its earthly and heavenly spheres.

12. What Scriptures describe the Eternal State?—2 Peter iii. 13-14 refer to the new heavens and new earth, the dwelling-place of righteousness; and Rev. xxi. 1-8 describe the relation of the Heavenly City to the new earth and the Eternal State, where God will be "all in all."

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